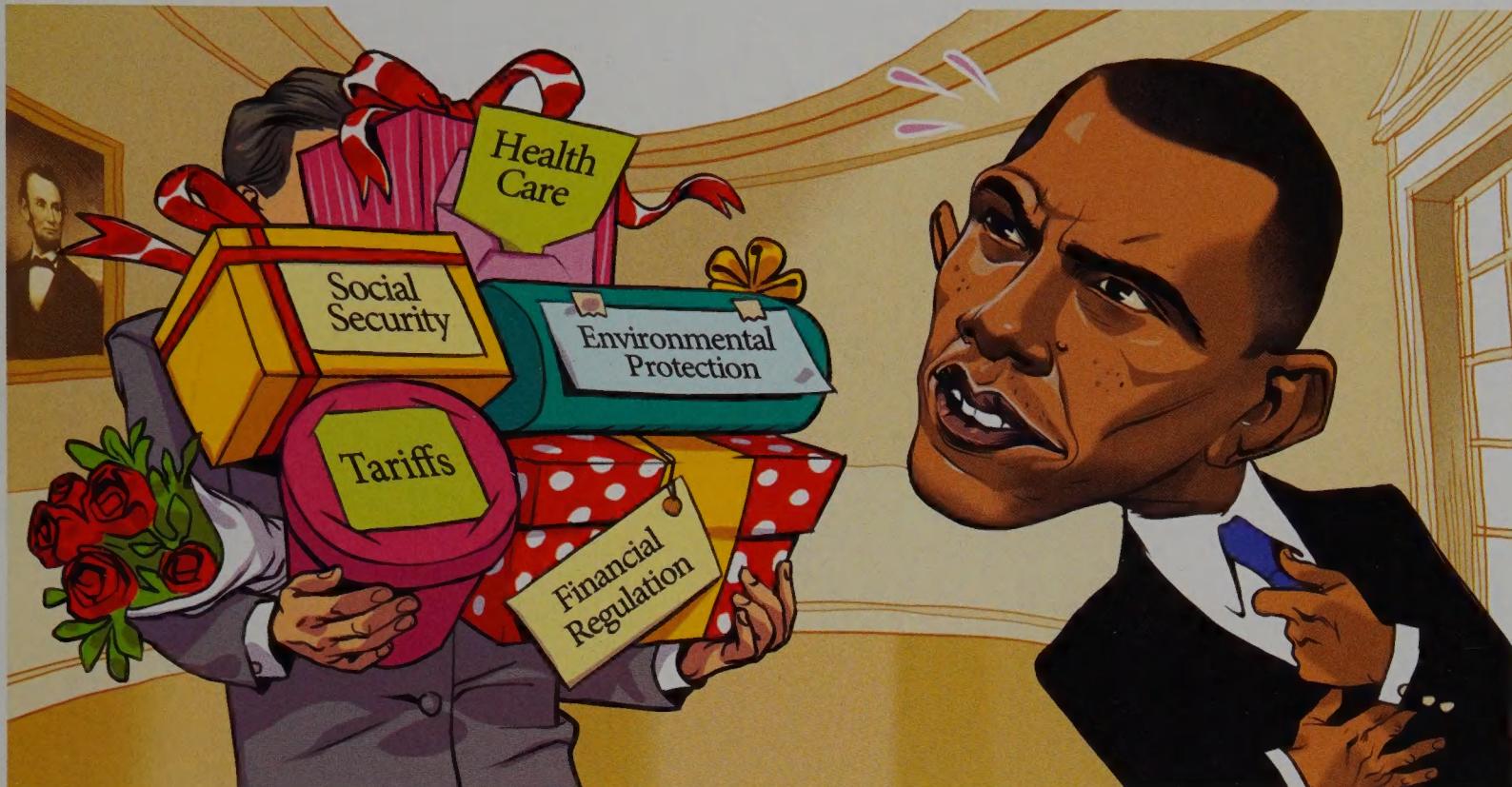


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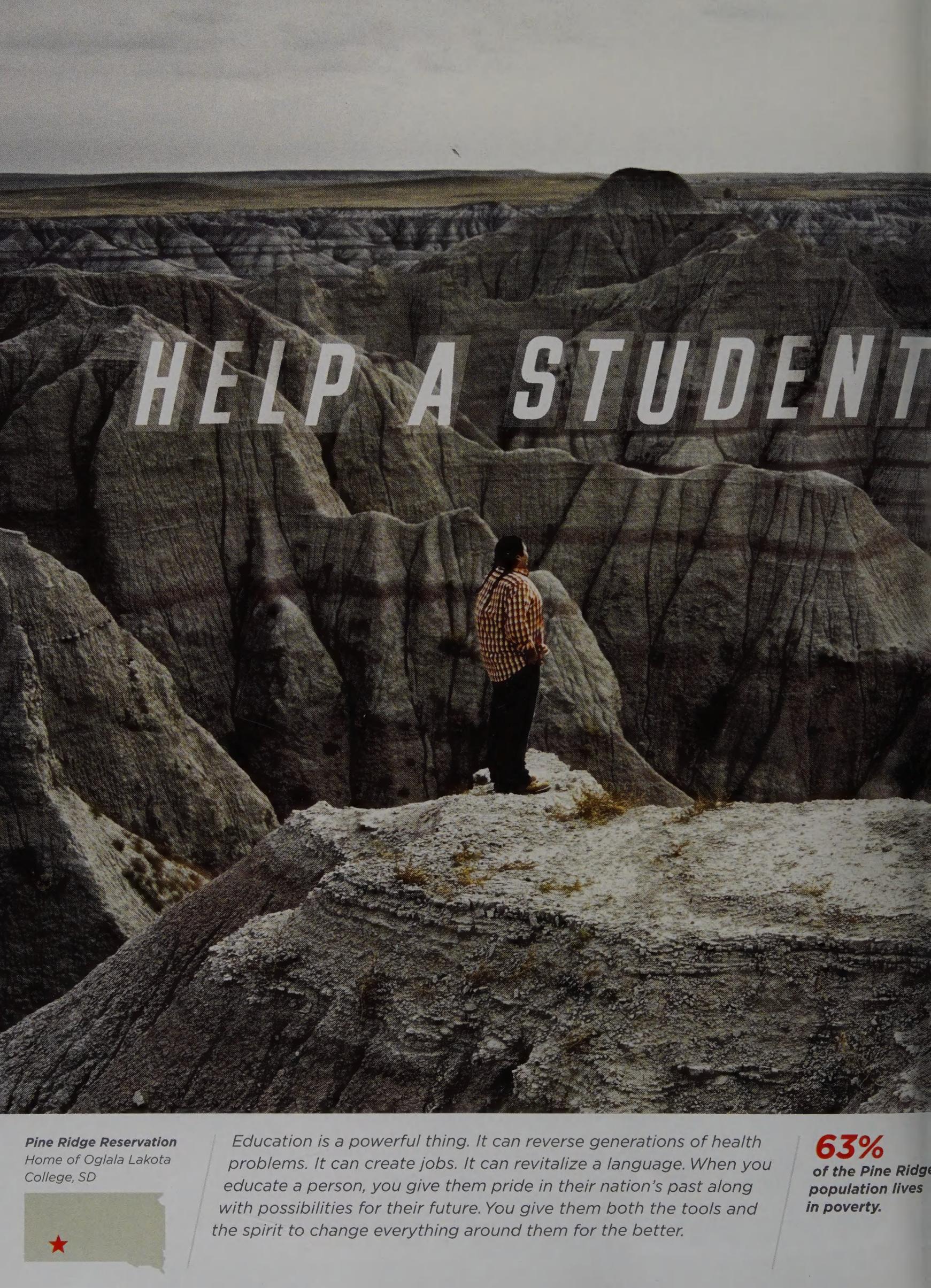
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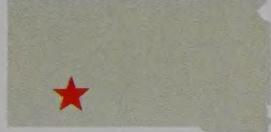
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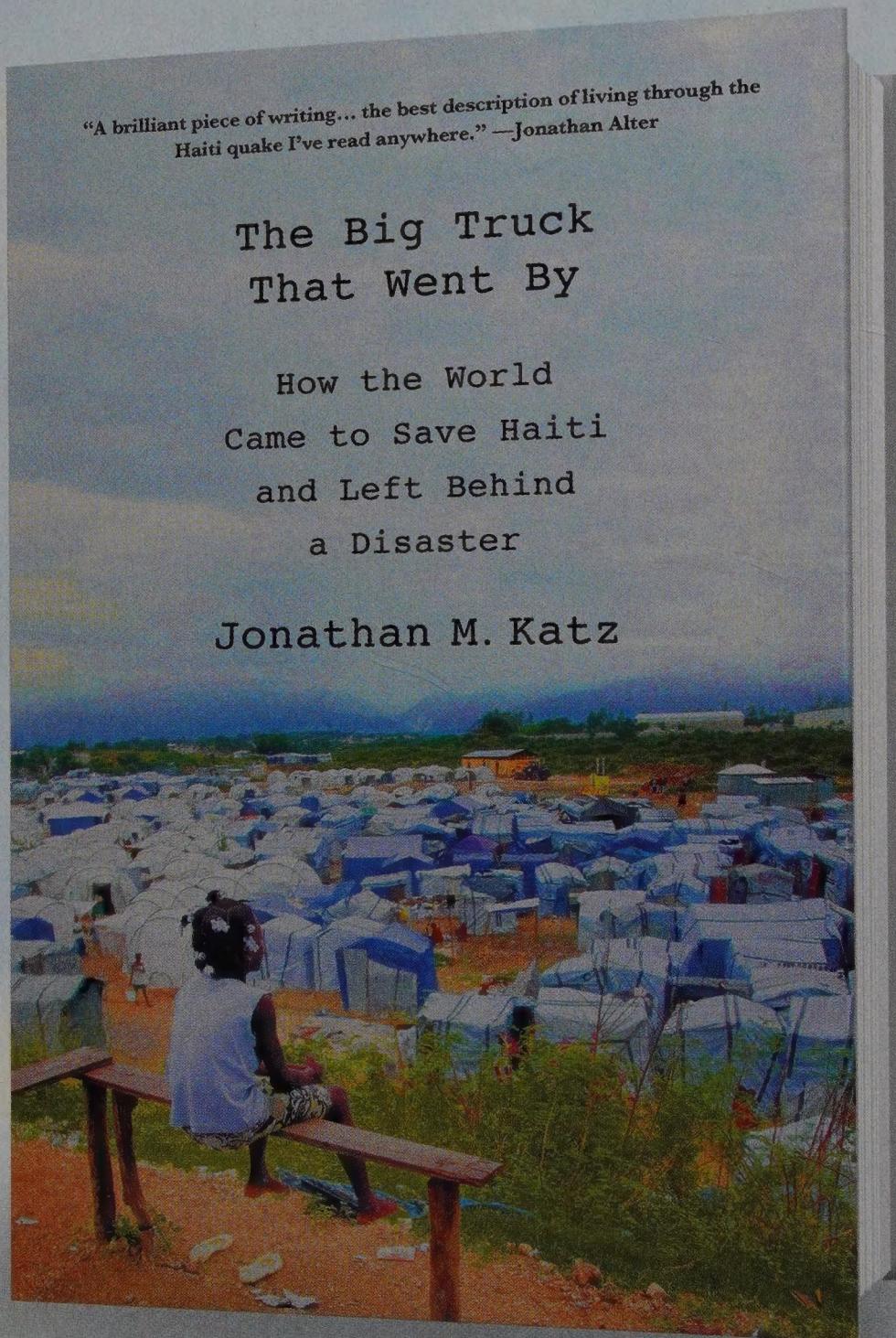
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Electoral College

Victoria Collier's report on the precariousness of this country's voting system ["How to Rig an Election," November] voices legitimate concerns but misdirects its anxiety. Many election-integrity advocates have called for "evidence-based elections," arguing that voting machines should have a software-independent, voter-verifiable paper audit trail, and contrary to the picture painted by Collier's bleak account, this advocacy has borne fruit.

Back in 2004, direct-recording electronic machines, many of them paperless, were indeed poised to overtake optical scanners as the preferred voting system. Since then, however, several states have begun eliminating DREs; other states have implemented paper-trail requirements for all DREs in use; and still others have updated their equipment with optical scanners instead of DREs. Overall, thirty-three states now keep paper ballots or records for every vote cast, and most of these states also mandate postelection audits. The work is, to be sure, unfinished: tens of millions of people still vote on unverifiable systems, and audit methods ought to be made substantially more rigorous and efficient.

Collier's dark tone may owe to the influence of election observers who

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are convinced that fraud is endemic and that nobody is listening to them. In fact, election-forensics experts have been listening; they just disagree. The specific arguments that Collier adduces for widespread fraud rely on conjecture and a selective reading of the evidence.

For the few failures we have identified, we should focus on implementing systems and procedures that help us recover. Last March, a routine post-election audit revealed that two local contests in Wellington, Florida, had been mistakenly decided, apparently due to a software error. A court-ordered recount carried out just eighteen days later corrected the outcomes. Such success stories should be built on, not ignored.

The United States has far to go to achieve the ideal of evidence-based elections—and pressures to adopt Internet voting pose a new threat. But just as we need evidence-based elections, so too do we need evidence-based critiques of our electoral process. Groundless suppositions should not distract us from the work at hand.

Mark Lindeman
Kingston, N.Y.

Victoria Collier responds:

After the passage of the Help America Vote Act, the election-reform movement at first limited itself to requesting a paper trail for DRE voting, but this strategy quickly proved not only insufficient but also dangerously misleading. A paper receipt that confirms the voter's selection does nothing to verify the

total ballot count and offers nothing more than a false sense of security. Optical scanners indeed allow for an auditable election, but the paper ballots are useless if they are not actually counted. Florida currently allows for audits under limited conditions, and only after the election has been certified. Relying on recounts is hardly prudent; we saw how well that worked for Al Gore.

New Spiel

As Ian Volner notes in his excellent survey of the architectural legacy of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ["The Invisible Stimulus," Portfolio, November], public appreciation for projects funded by the 2009 stimulus is nowhere near the level still felt for New Deal projects. One reason recent construction has failed to produce widespread recognition of the stimulus's value is the simple reality of modern governance. No longer does the federal government take on the entire cost of dams or nuclear power plants. Today, megaprojects are financed with a combination of federal and state tax revenue, bond sales, tolls, and private capital.

Our understanding of how the New Deal worked is also clouded by seventy-five years of mythology: the Hoover Dam, which many consider the centerpiece of FDR's public-works program, was actually authorized by Congress in 1928, during Calvin Coolidge's administration and before the stock-market crash. Future generations may not appreciate our stimulus projects as we do those of the New Deal, but their legacy will endure.

Michael Grabell
New York City

Room for Debate

Robert Andrew Powell's recent Letter from Seattle ["In the Writers' Room," November] puzzled me. I, too, have spent many hours in the Writers' Room at the Seattle Central Library, but I've never seen any incidents like those he describes—no brushing of teeth or cutting of hair or vomit on the elevator floor. And nothing like

this has ever come up at the community meetings I've attended, where the main issues discussed tend to be the dearth of copies of popular books and the need for more comfortable chairs. Given the chaos Powell describes, you would think Seattle would be up in arms over the state of our libraries, but city voters recently passed a property-tax levy to increase their funding.

The Seattle Central Library indeed welcomes homeless people, just as it invites all the city's residents, as well as visitors like Powell. Its patrons are diverse, but everyone seems to understand that we share the building and need to respect one another. When I go there, I like to take a circuitous route to the Writers' Room. Sometimes I head to the top floor, where there's often a group of boys playing cards. Their game is wordless but lively, full of smirks and pointing fingers. I watch for a few moments, amazed that kids hang out here; but in a rainy town like Seattle, the library is a haven—and we're all lucky to have it.

Anne Miano
Seattle

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Second Chance
By Thomas Frank

Inauguration Day is upon us. And it seems like only yesterday that the colossal, overheating machinery of democracy, which had been running in high gear for almost two years, finally powered down. The resources marshaled on its behalf defy human comprehension. A few ballpark numbers: an estimated \$6 billion was flushed down the tubes over the course of the campaign. An estimated 300 million of those dollars were directed to their targets by superconsultant (and Fox News tantrum thrower) Karl Rove. An estimated 60 million of them were ponied up by a single man, casino magnate Sheldon Adelson. An estimated 1 million TV commercials clogged the nation's airwaves. And an estimated seventeen months were filled with wall-to-wall rhetoric—beginning on the day in June 2011 when the full complement of Republican presidential hopefuls conducted their first debate in New Hampshire.

Do you even remember their names, reader? Let each roll off your tongue, and savor the receding memories. There was Newt Gingrich—the bitter, familiar one. Michele Bachmann—the confused, panicked one. Rick Perry—hair. Ron Paul—Constitution. Herman Cain—pizza. Rick Santorum—coal-mining grandfather, sweater-vest. Mitt Romney—hair, Olympics. Only after fourteen months did this Combat of the Seven yield a champion to go forth against the Democrats.

The battle now joined, the mighty rivals fought over the same swing states as last time, and the time before that, and the time before that. They rallied the same constituent groups. They slagged one another with the same stereotypes used in every election since

1968. They fielded the customary armies of strategists and fund-raisers and communications directors and doorbell ringers. The advances and retreats of this army were then followed by a second expeditionary force—an International Brigade of journalists who jammed the campaign jets, begged for a comment, clustered around the Hamilton County Board of Elections office in Ohio, and ultimately assumed the starring role themselves, pinching and poking and waving at their touch-activated, data-dredging Magic Walls.

And then it was over. Once the numbers were in, both winner and loser spoke sagely about bipartisan togetherness. Every pundit worth his blue blazer interpreted the results in the same, time-honored manner: as a victory for centrism. Both parties, they declared, had work to do. Republicans needed to move to the center in order to court the Latinos, the young, the single mothers. Democrats needed to move to the center simply to appease their pouting opponents. No, wait: Democrats had already moved to the center, and this election vindicated their wisdom.

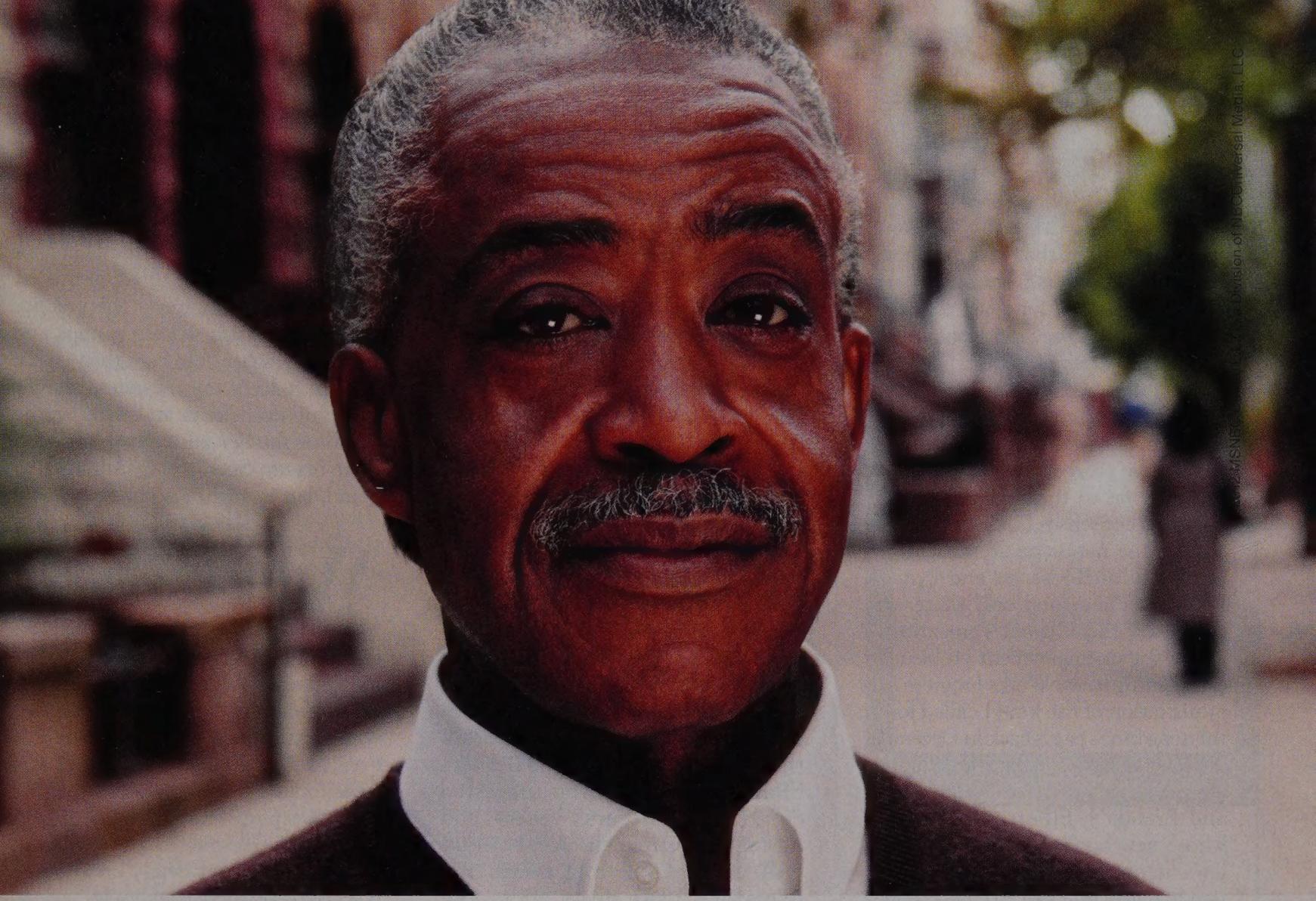
In other words, we were back where we had started. Like some kind of electoral Battle of Verdun, this costly triumph had shifted the front lines only slightly. House, Senate, and Oval Office all stayed in the same hands. All those commercials, debates, rallies, speeches, books, profiles, and columns had no more changed the world than a season's worth of Major League baseball or a feud between *American Idol* judges.

And now that the smoke has cleared, we are face-to-face with the great overlooked subject of 2012.

Namely: What will Barack Obama do with his second term?

The president did tell us his plans, of course. Virtually no one paid any attention to what he said, but he said it nonetheless. For the record, the document was called *The New Economic Patriotism: A Plan for Jobs & Middle-Class Security*, and it was released during the final, fevered weeks of the campaign. It contained, among other things, a vague promise to encourage American manufacturing, which turned out mainly to be a way of calling attention to the president's 2009 bailout of the auto industry. Obama also filled its pages with sweet talk about small business, bowing to the political god of the year. He rhapsodized about clean energy, education, and fair taxes, and wrapped the whole thing up with a not-very-reassuring reassurance that "our problems can be solved."

Even now, Barack Obama's most enthusiastic supporters are strangely muted on the subject of his second-term plans. Oh, they are excited by his victory. Some think it portends the final destruction of conservatism and the coming of better days—a liberal millennium to match the deferred Rovian dream of a permanent majority. But when you get down to specifics, their vision of Obama Redux is always couched in reactive, even passive terms. Rather than anticipating forceful leadership in the FDR mold, they pray that the president will adroitly handle whatever cards he is dealt and triumph by the simple virtue of remaining in the game. His continued presence in the Oval Office, for example, will be enough to ensure that Obamacare gets implemented as it was planned almost three years ago. Whatever he does to keep the nation from



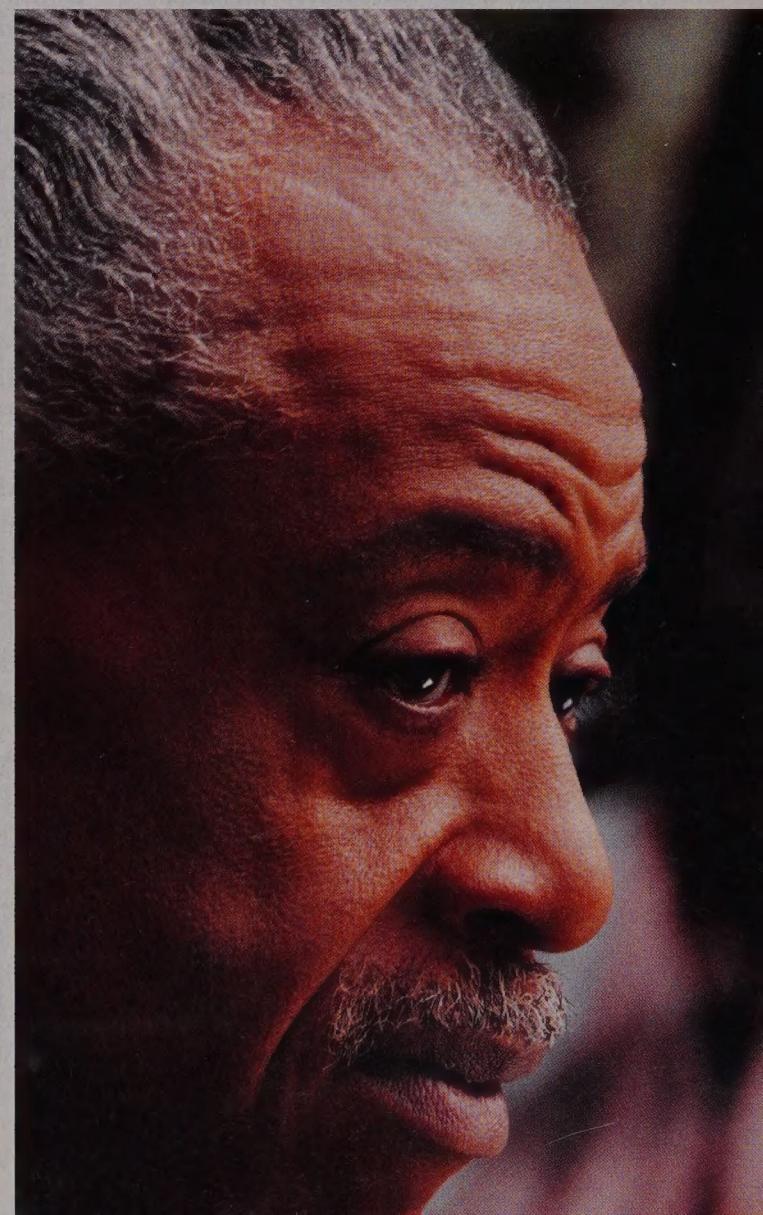
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BUILT AMERICA. IT'S
TIME FOR AMERICA
TO REBUILD
THE MIDDLE CLASS.”**

~Al Sharpton

LEAN FORWARD

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REV. AL SHARPTON, msnbc host



tumbling over the “fiscal cliff” will look heroic, since the alternative—which he can achieve by doing nothing—is acceptable to neither party. Nerviest of all is the expectation, expressed by Andrew Sullivan, that as the economy inevitably recovers, Americans will come to realize at long last that they love Obama, as they did Ronald Reagan. Such audacious hopes!

To find someone who sincerely believes that Barack Obama is going to preside over his second term as a strong, determined progressive, you must make your way far to the right. There, the panicked consensus holds that he will remake the nation as dramatically as did Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. There, and only there, will you be told that Obama is preparing to tackle the unemployment problem by establishing a new Works Progress Administration of the kind I called for in this magazine’s pages back in December 2011. Of course, for the true believers who make this assertion—Aaron Klein and Brenda J. Elliott, for example, whose new book, *Fool Me Twice*, follows up on their earlier *The Manchurian President and Red Army*—the idea of a resurgent WPA is the ultimate slacker-coddling nightmare.

But as I hacked my way through *Fool Me Twice*’s terrifying liberal dystopia, whose particulars are backed up by diligent research in the John Birch Society’s flagship magazine, I wanted to cheer. It all sounded great to me. According to Klein and Elliott, a second Obama term will bring us cuts in military spending, a single-payer system of universal health care, methodical plans to fight global warming, and a mandate that would require all government projects to “buy American”—this last outrage supposedly a result of

Obama’s anxious solicitude for organized labor!

As it happens, there is another Obama campaign document that tells us far more about his second-term intentions. I am referring to the now-legendary interview the president gave to the *Des Moines Register* two weeks before Election Day. At first, Obama campaign officials had insisted that the interview be off-the-record, and only later did they agree to its publication. The president, perhaps assuming that

his remarks would remain private, was unusually candid—and what he promised was anything but four years of nationalized banks and sharia law.

Perhaps it will surprise you to learn that his real policy ambition was the same as always: to achieve the Grand Bargain.* Which is to say, a fiscal deal between the parties that would enact the centrist dream agenda all at once by cutting spending, increasing tax revenue, and (in at least one version of it) “reforming” entitlements. The Great Conciliator in the White House has longed for such a bargain for years. In pursuit of it, he created the Bowles-Simpson commission, then a special committee chaired by Vice President Joe Biden, then led his own series of meetings and horse-trading sessions. (And that’s not counting the failed congressional “Super Committee” of late 2011.)

Each of these efforts saw Democrats offering to permanently shrink the size of government. The Bowles-Simpson proposal even suggested cutting Social Security benefits and raising the retirement age, both utterly unthinkable to a traditional liberal. But with every effort, the push for a Grand Bargain foundered on total Republican resistance to tax increases—and the resulting string of failures finally culminated in the debt-ceiling crisis of 2011.

Ah, but this time, things just might be different. To some degree, Obama won reelection on a promise to increase the taxes paid by the rich. Appearing to recognize this aspect of the president’s victory, House Speaker John Boehner declared on November 7 that the G.O.P. was “willing to accept new revenues”—a mealy-mouthed formulation that at least leaves the door open to tax hikes, especially if they’re disguised as closed loopholes and quashed deductions. In return, argued Boehner, Democrats needed to acknowledge that Social Security and Medicare were “the root of the problem.” Maybe this time, both men will get what they want. And oh, how awesome that will be.

* “[W]e can get what is the equivalent of the Grand Bargain,” Obama told the paper. He also spoke of his hopes for “immigration reform,” figuring that Republicans would be eager to placate Latino voters after driving them away for the past few elections.

Another term for the Grand Bargain might be “austerity”—the punitive economic reflex that has driven much of Europe into deep recession. Austerity proceeds from the reasonable-sounding premise that government must cut back spending during hard times, just as everyone else does. However, this practice actually serves to worsen slumps and recessions rather than cure them. That in turn reduces tax revenues, thereby pumping up deficits and making the need for further austerity seem even more urgent. Such a bargain might be grand, but it might also be stupid and self-destructive. Why does the president crave it so?

When the Obama Administration was young and orthodoxy was on the ropes, the president was a dogged foe of austerity: he secured the passage of a large stimulus package, which ballooned the federal deficit even as it cushioned the blow of the recession. And he didn’t wait to enact some sweeping Treaty of Dupont Circle, either. He passed the stimulus over the noisy and nearly unanimous objections of the Republicans and simultaneously flew in the face of the city’s traditional predilections.

Washington’s most prominent residents have always had trouble understanding the economic problems of the country outside the Beltway. Other Americans grasp the symbiotic relationship between the economy at large and the government’s balance sheet. Washingtonians, however, view the government’s own fiscal situation—meaning the federal deficit—as something autonomous and detached from the nation’s sweaty, second-wave struggles. The deficit is thought to be a problem all on its own, a disaster separate from and comparable to the recession itself.

Recall, in this connection, one of the strangest rhetorical thrusts made by Joe Biden during his debate with Paul Ryan. The subject was the high unemployment rate and the lingering economic slump, and Biden began like this: “They talk about this Great Recession [as] if it fell out of the sky, like, ‘Oh my goodness, where did it come from?’” I was excited to hear this, thinking sarcastic old Joe was about to drop some pungent knowl-

edge about financial deregulation on the naïve Young Gun across the table from him. But no:

It came from this man [meaning Ryan and, by extension, the Republican Congress of the Bush years] voting to put two wars on a credit card, to put at the same time a prescription-drug benefit on the credit card, [and] a trillion-dollar tax cut for the very wealthy. I was there. I voted against him. I said, 'No, we can't afford that.' And now all of a sudden these guys are so seized with a concern about the debt that they created.

Had I heard correctly? Yes: Biden had started on a history of the Great Recession and switched in midstream to a history of the federal budget deficit, as though that was what caused the slump. He got the relationship backwards. Of course the deficits of the Bush years were irresponsible, but they didn't crash the economy—Wall Street did that. And that crash, in turn, is what really drove the deficit through the roof, not the other way around.

Biden's cognitive fumble didn't draw the kind of Beltway beatdown his other blunders earned during the campaign. That's because what he said is not really considered an error in this burg. While the rest of the nation worries about unemployment and bankruptcy and the great corporate rip-off, people in D.C. worry about the deficit. The last category makes sense to the Washington mind; the other stuff is statistics.

When elite Washingtonians cluck about the federal deficit, moreover, they do so in a highly predictable way. The moral symbolism of the issue is always the same: tackling deficits is supposed to be the highest calling of statesmanship, the "hard decisions" that a real leader must make. And the solution to the deficit challenge is also, always, the same. Washingtonians not only think they know what that solution is but also tend to assume that every responsible, educated person either agrees with them or is some kind of demagogue. You know what I'm talking about: the evil entitlements, which must be reformed before they destroy American civilization. Medicare and Social Security, those sucking chest wounds in our body politic, simply cannot be al-

lowed to continue festering as they have in the past.

I have heard some version of this story line since the day I met my first congressional staffer back in the 1980s. I've heard it from Democrats as well as Republicans; from losers as well as winners. Indeed, I read it just yesterday in *The Price of Politics*, by that consummate Washington insider, Bob Woodward. His book is, naturally, about the search for the Grand Bargain. And in a concluding passage, the author blames Obama for failing to be presidential enough to solve what everyone knows is the True Problem. "Unsustainable entitlement spending on Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security," laments Woodward, "highlighted by Republican House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan and familiar to all informed politicians and economists, including the president and Boehner, has been left largely unaddressed."

I added those italics to Woodward's sentence, reader, and I did it to emphasize the kind of cosmic clubbiness that lurks behind the Washington consensus. There is no amount of evidence or argument that will budge this fixed verdict about social insurance; everyone who is "informed" knows it to be true. Everyone who is "informed" agrees. Knowing it, agreeing on it—these things are the price of admission to Woodward's smug, happy world.

Barack Obama's Democrats just won a resounding triumph in what was advertised as the great ideological face-off of our times. What we the people chose, according to this viewpoint, was social insurance, universal health care, a strong regulatory state. What this town urges on President Obama, unfortunately, is something quite different: an imaginary armistice between the two parties, purchased at the cost of the very things his supporters think they just voted for. It is a recipe for greatness credible to the *soi-disant* "informed," maybe. But to nearly everyone else, it rings with the hollow and obsolete magical thinking of Washington, D.C.

These are the childish things Barack Obama must put away in his second inaugural address. The path of destiny leads elsewhere. ■

"A masterpiece."

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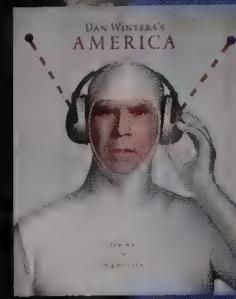
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THE ANTI-ECONOMIST

Trading for Jobs
By Jeff Madrick

As President Obama begins his second term, our gross domestic product is in recovery mode. But the jobs market is still in a Great Recession. Unemployment hovers stubbornly around 8 percent. At current rates of growth, it isn't likely to fall to the projected "new normal" of 6 percent for another eight to ten years. An even higher proportion of the population cannot find a full-time job, and there are more long-term unemployed workers than ever before.

Obama spent little of his first term working on job creation, mistakenly believing he'd already solved the problem with his stimulus. Last fall, facing a slowing economy and high unemployment before Election Day, he finally shifted his policy focus. Let's hope that this time around Obama realizes that fixing the jobs hole is critical, and that it will require every tool in his kit. The national obsession with cutting the deficit immediately is likely to limit further fiscal stimulus and investment in infrastructure, which is why the president must not neglect another key strategy: rethinking America's trade policies.

Until now, the president's attitude toward trade has not differed in any serious way from that of his predecessors. He has taken a few steps to curb Chinese imports but has made no comprehensive push to ensure our partners are trading fairly or to adjust past agreements in light of our nation's employment emergency. Obama not only failed to keep a 2008 election promise to amend the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico; he reaffirmed NAFTA's outdated principles when signing new trade agreements with countries such as Colombia and Panama.

The president's actions here are something of a mystery. He still seems

to think that bilateral free-trade agreements (FTAs)—agreements with individual nations to cut tariffs and other barriers to the trading of goods and services—are a key path to job growth. This past year, he spoke repeatedly about doubling exports through the signing of these agreements, claiming their implementation would help create jobs in manufacturing. But he ignored the impact of imports, which tend to increase under FTAs and cause trade deficits that send jobs overseas. Some manufacturing jobs have come back since the lowest point of the recession, but as Robert E. Scott of the Economic Policy Institute notes, this phenomenon is due almost entirely to the increase in domestic demand as the economy improves rather than to the Obama Administration's trade policies.

Late in 2011, the president signed an FTA with South Korea. Since the agreement's implementation last March, there has been a substantial rise in America's trade deficit with Korea. It is likely, says Scott, that the United States will lose nearly 160,000 jobs because of the agreement.

Perhaps FTAs are Obama's way of placating a business community otherwise so critical of Dodd-Frank re-regulation policies and the administration's call for higher taxes on the rich. The deals benefit no one so much as exporters and companies that invest overseas, a fact that might also explain why the FTAs Obama likes are the same kinds that were favored by George W. Bush.

There is another troubling side to Obama's trade policies. Trade agreements can be used to pressure our partners to improve labor standards in their own countries in exchange for access to and new investment

from the U.S. market. In other words, we could foster progressive employment-standards improvements of the kind we implemented here in the late nineteenth century. Rising wages and better conditions abroad would in turn level the playing field for American companies.

Obama has talked about enforcing labor standards internationally—and he claims his FTAs do so, if modestly. But he now seems willing to jettison this critical principle as he pushes for one of the broadest trade agreements yet, a nine-nation pact called the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The TPP originated under Bush but is only now nearing completion. The president has been eager to finalize the partnership, which he views as a possible bulwark against spreading Chinese influence, a part of his administration's new Asian focus. But the deal would include Vietnam, whose labor conditions are among the worst in the world, a fact unlikely to be affected by membership in TPP. Given how enticing access to Vietnam's large, growing economy is to American businesses, Obama has decided simply to look the other way.

Its inclusion of Vietnam isn't the TPP's only worrisome element. The agreement contains an unfortunate provision adapted from NAFTA. Like Clinton before him, Obama is so determined to stimulate investment that he has been willing to give individual companies the right to sue national and state governments over regulations such as capital controls or minimum wages that might present obstacles to trade. Under these provisions, a formal challenge by a business is sent to an international tribunal of experts, which decides whether the regulations in question ought to be changed and whether a nation will be sanctioned with fines. The results of such tribunals

could well spur further deregulation, thus watering down standards governing everything from worker safety to unionization. If this sounds like a deliberate relinquishing of national sovereignty, that's because it is.

NAFTA offers several good examples of how the tribunal system works in practice. In 1999, the Canadian company Methanex sued the state of California for barring the sale of the gasoline additive Methanex made. A university report had found that the poisonous additive could contaminate groundwater. Though Methanex didn't ultimately win the \$1 billion suit, trade analysts say the claim had a chilling effect on subsequent state regulations.

"For all the talk about bipartisanship, the only real bipartisanship under Obama has been over trade agreements," says Mark Levinson, chief economist of the Services Employees International Union. "The Republicans have loved them." What is clear, Levinson says, is that TPP will protect corporations far more than it will workers or the environment.

For those like me who studied free-trade economics in their youth, the hold of its simple, compelling promise—that if every country exports what it makes most efficiently, everyone is better off—can be difficult to shake. After World War II, the rapid growth in global trade seemed to confirm this belief. Europe and then Japan became wealthy, the United States still wealthier.

But as this nation's trade surplus turned into a deficit in the 1970s and we increasingly traded with low-wage nations, the flaws in free-trade theory became apparent. It required heroic assumptions that were often ignored—for starters, that all trading countries would always enjoy full employment. Thus the fifty-five-year-old machinist who lost his job as American production moved abroad would find a new one waiting for him.

The theory also assumed that trade was really free, but this was never completely the case. There were many non-tariff barriers to trade: state subsidies to businesses, restrictions on the distribution of foreign goods, cultural inhibitions about the buying of them, and,

most conspicuously, manipulation of currencies to make exports artificially cheap. The United States was not innocent in this regard. For example, it consistently maintained quotas on Japanese imports to protect Detroit automakers.

All other things being equal, free trade among nations deserves promotion. Protecting domestic jobs at the expense of subsistence jobs in poorer nations is hardly a humanist approach. But the failed record of free-trade agreements can no longer be ignored. Twenty years after the passage of NAFTA, the evidence from that agreement and a dozen or so other FTAs is overwhelming. All have fallen short of their basic promise of benefiting all participant nations. NAFTA may have been responsible for the loss of as many as 700,000 U.S. jobs, according to Robert E. Scott, as the trade deficit with Mexico soared. Trade liberalization with China over the past decade, which led to a trade deficit of some \$300 billion last year—about half America's overall deficit—may have cost the nation 2.7 million more.

Economic relationships are admittedly complicated. Some economists argue that trade deficits do not automatically result in lost jobs. Lower prices on foreign goods free up resources to be spent in other parts of the U.S. economy. So the United States could in theory thrive as trade deficits rise. But even simplistic government models, which claim any tariff is an impediment to growth, show only a marginal improvement in America's GDP due to NAFTA, according to Kevin Gallagher, an economist at Boston University. And these same models, says Gallagher, show several hundred thousand lost jobs.

The intransigent unemployment rate is not the nation's only job concern at present, or even its greatest. Many of the jobs created since the recovery began in mid-2009 are simply bad—they pay low wages and offer few prospects for better work in the future.

Many mainstream economists believe that growth is simply not strong

enough because it's still held back by high levels of household debt from the housing boom. Once debt levels fall, they argue, faster growth will solve our problems. But this can't be the whole answer when so many bad jobs are being created even while the economy grows. And it is increasingly obvious that trade has a lot to do with job quality.

Fortunately, there are signs the conventional wisdom is beginning to change. The Princeton economist and former Federal Reserve vice chairman Alan S. Blinder was among the first mainstream economists to admit that almost anything that could be automated could be manufactured overseas. Labor economists such as David Autor of MIT and Lawrence Katz of Harvard wrote papers showing that middle-class jobs were being lost as Americans bought products from foreign companies and domestic companies moved production offshore.

In 2008, a few months before becoming Obama's chief economic adviser, Lawrence Summers wrote a piece in the *Financial Times* acknowledging that

there are reasons to think that economic success abroad will be more problematic for American workers in the future. First, developing countries increasingly export goods such as computers that the US produces on a significant scale, putting pressure on wages. At the same time, rising global prosperity increases the rewards accruing to the already highly paid producers of intellectual property goods such as films.

But few bold new plans to address these facts are forthcoming. The chief response to the growing recognition of the challenges free trade brings has been the call for a better-educated workforce, which will supposedly allow the United States to make ever more sophisticated products with which less developed nations can't compete. And who could argue with that? Education is like motherhood and apple pie to economists. But they've been relying on the same narrative since the 1980s. I doubt we can wait another ten or twenty years for this education revolution—nor is it likely ever to come, given Washington's attachment to reducing the deficit at the expense of investing in the

nation's future. In any case, improved education is at best a partial answer. To most economists, tinkering with the fundamentals of free trade is simply off-limits.

There ought to be a way to moderate the damage done by free trade without undermining its advantages. For a century after the Civil War, economic growth in the United States went hand in hand with rising wages. If a large national economy can be win-win, why can't a large world economy?

We could start by analyzing every trade agreement to see who wins and loses. The U.S. International Trade Commission does just that, but its methodology is not open to public scrutiny, and the results of its analyses do not occasion serious debate.

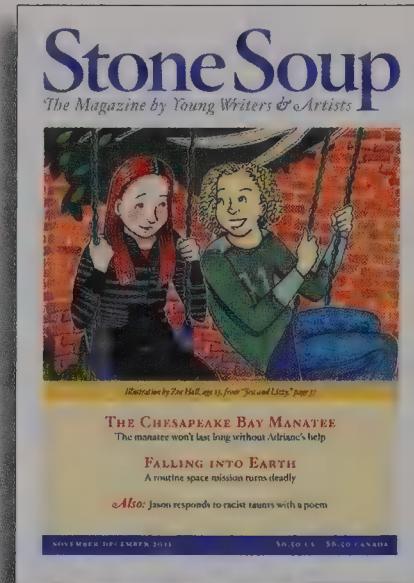
Next, we could take more seriously the goal of creating and enforcing higher labor standards abroad. In 1998, the International Labour Organization developed a list of such standards, including guarantees of unionization rights and provisions against child labor and basic forms of age-, gender-, and race-based prejudice. But enforcement will be shoddy unless Obama takes the lead, and it looks like he won't.

A third approach is to curtail currency manipulation, which frequently harms American producers of goods. Thea Lee of the AFL-CIO argues that provisions to prevent currency manipulation should be built into new trade agreements. Others have suggested levying tariffs on imports unless such manipulation is stopped.

It is also time for more aggressive industrial policies in the United States, including direct investment in new technologies and infant industries and significantly more subsidies of nondefense research and development. As a proportion of GDP, such spending has fallen significantly in recent years. Finally, a safety net including not just unemployment insurance but also high-quality job training should be developed for those put out of work by trade.

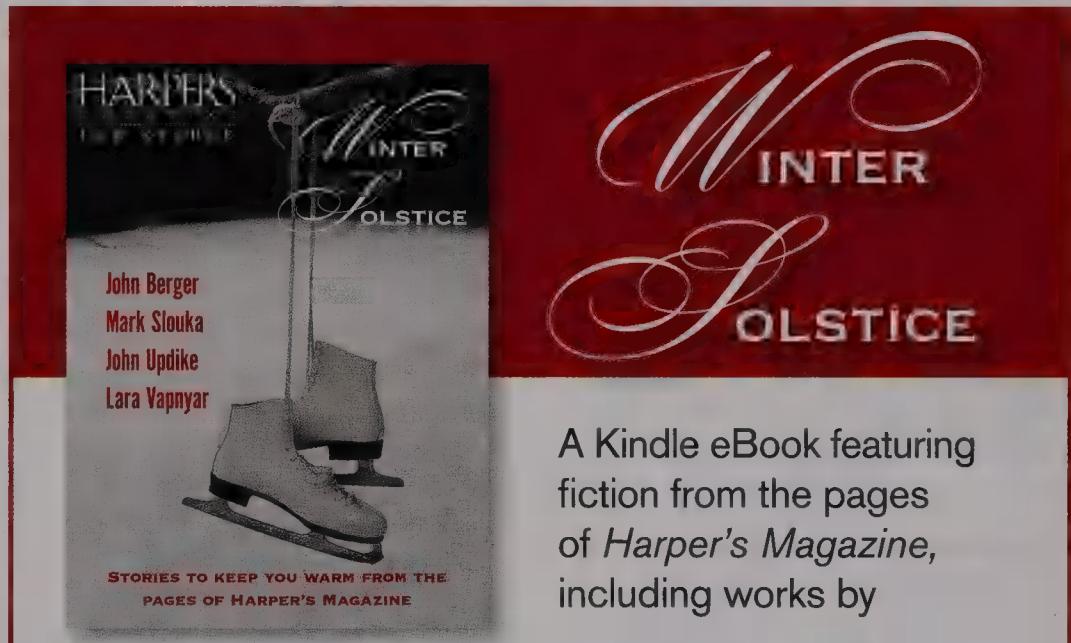
But President Obama's first step should be to rethink TPP. With a new term, he has a new chance on trade policy. He cannot afford to be tepid in pursuing serious change this time around. ■

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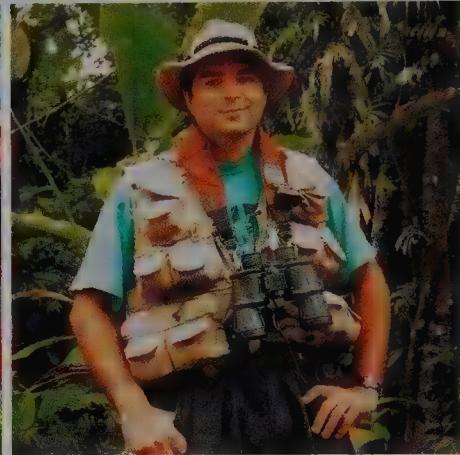
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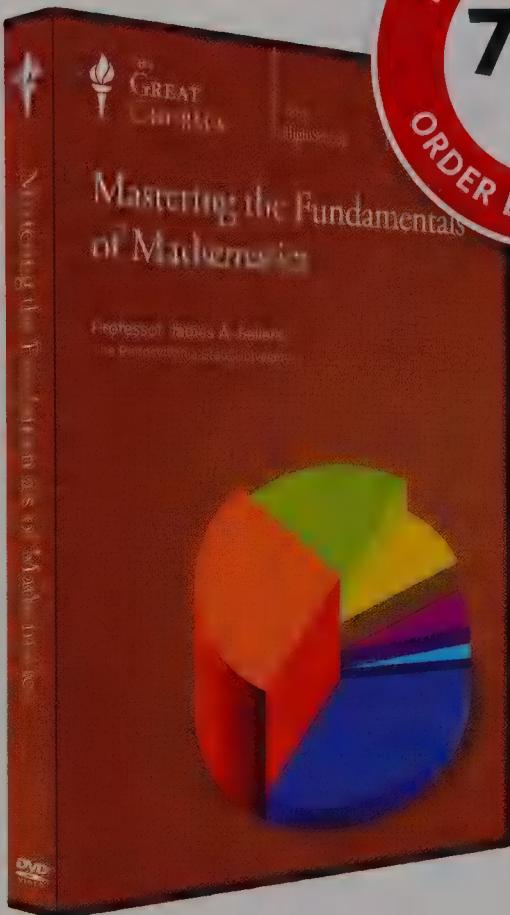
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Number of signatures a petition posted on whitehouse.gov must obtain within thirty days to "require a response" ■ 25,000
Number a petition calling for Texas to secede from the Union obtained within a week of being posted last November ■ 100,000
Amount set aside for states to aid homeowners in a 2012 government settlement with mortgage lenders ■ \$2,500,000,000
Portion of that amount the states plan to use for other purposes ■ 2/5
Increase since 2009 in the number of people over the age of 55 who are working ■ 3,710,000
Ratio of U.S. farmers age 65 and older to those under the age of 35 ■ 7:1
Rank of "attire" among the leading reasons "millennials" are unsuccessful in job interviews ■ 1
Rank of their posting inappropriate pictures on social media ■ 2
Percentage of the population of Valencia, Spain, that is currently unemployed ■ 28
Price of a weeklong prostitution training course offered there since May ■ \$127
Percentage of public U.S. colleges and universities whose tuition has increased by more than half in the past five years ■ 15
Portion of its campuses the University of Phoenix plans to "phase out" beginning this year ■ 1/2
Average salary earned by a full-time-employed male college graduate one year after graduation ■ \$42,918
By a full-time-employed female graduate ■ \$35,296
Percentage of U.S. girls who are Girl Scouts ■ 8
Of female senators who are ■ 70
Percentage of characters shown on television in the United States who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual ■ 4.4
Cost of a pair of "all-American" blue jeans designed by Glenn Beck ■ \$129.99
Rank of Philadelphia among U.S. cities with the most per capita purchases of sweatpants and sweatshirts ■ 1
Percentage of Canadians who believe in global warming ■ 98
Of Americans who do ■ 70
Of Republicans ■ 48
Percentage of Republicans who believe in demonic possession ■ 68
Minimum number of grave sites photographed to build a grave-finding app for visitors to Arlington National Cemetery ■ 260,000
Average number of days a U.S. veteran waits for a response to a claim filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs ■ 260
Percentage increase in Chicago homicides last year ■ 18
Amount in health-care spending on shooting victims that local officials hope to recoup through a new firearms tax ■ \$600,000
Estimated value of marijuana plants found growing on a single lot on Chicago's South Side last October ■ \$5,443,000
Percentage by which the drug- and alcohol-test failure rates for Amtrak workers are higher than the industry average ■ 51
Square footage of a proposed \$35 million animal-holding center to be built at John F. Kennedy International Airport ■ 172,165
Minimum number of Red Bull-sponsored athletes who have died in parachuting, paragliding, and skydiving stunts ■ 5
Minutes the average U.S. worker must work to pay for 12 ounces of beer ■ 3.3
The average Indian worker ■ 36
Number of Steak 'N Shake restaurants set to open in the United Arab Emirates over the next five years ■ 40
Estimated tons of meat eaten annually in China ■ 88,000,000
Minimum number of Chinese government agencies whose mission includes containing social unrest ■ 40
Value of bribes reported through Bribr, a Russian anticorruption app released last September ■ \$1,577,127
Estimated minimum cost to make and market Peter Jackson's film-trilogy adaptation of *The Hobbit* ■ \$1,000,000,000
Amount New Zealand's tourism board has spent to promote the nation as "100 percent Middle-earth" ■ \$8,200,000

*Figures cited are the latest available as of November 2012. Sources are listed on page 78.
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READINGS

[Essay]

HEIRS APPARENT

From *A History of Future Cities*, by Daniel Brook, to be published next month by W. W. Norton. Brook's article "New Hampshire Goddam" appeared in the November 2012 issue of Harper's Magazine.

On the bottom floor of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, far from the crowds craning their necks to glimpse a Raphael or a Rembrandt, are a series of rooms designed in the mid-nineteenth century by a German architect. A marriage of tsarist opulence and neoclassical order, each room places the visitor in a different symmetrical space defined by columns, arches, and pilasters of richly polished marble, one room a somber gray, the next an arresting red, another a flighty pink. In each of these pseudo-Greek rooms stand pseudo-Greek statues: Roman copies of Greek originals.

The wall labels next to the sculptures proudly proclaim their pilfered provenance:

APOLLO, MARBLE, ROMAN WORK. 1ST C. A.D. AFTER
THE GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE 4TH C. B.C.

EROS, MARBLE, ROMAN WORK. 2ND C. A.D. AFTER
THE GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE
4TH C. B.C.

ATHENA, MARBLE, ROMAN WORK. 2ND C. A.D. AFTER
THE GREEK ORIGINAL OF THE LATE 5TH C. B.C.

In these neoclassical rooms of the Hermitage, as in the larger neoclassical city that surrounds it, the Russians lay claim to the glories of Western civilization through impersonation, desperately trying to write themselves into the history

of the West. Yet in these statues, we see the Romans, seemingly the epitome of Western civilization, doing exactly the same thing. By copying the glories of ancient Greece, they, too, are willingly themselves heirs to its culture.

That the Romans copied the Greeks hardly means their civilization was a fraud. The Romans went on to make their own contributions, far surpassing the Greeks in such fields as engineering and logistics. That the Romans copied does not mean history is nothing but copying. It does mean, however, that copying is an integral part of history.

Though Westernness feels like an immutable inheritance, whether a people sees itself as heir is actually a conscious decision that only later becomes an unconscious patrimony. Many of the Egyptians and Syrians of today are the descendants of Roman citizens, and yet they see themselves as non-Western. Many even consider themselves to be in a struggle against the West. Meanwhile the Germans, descended from the barbarians who sacked Rome, consider themselves heirs to Western civilization. A city such as Berlin, with its neoclassical museum buildings, is no different than St. Petersburg in its *ex post facto* writing of its people into the Western tradition. Berlin feels less Disneyfied than St. Petersburg only because the ruse has worked. While just 12 percent of Russians tell pollsters that they always "feel European," no pollster would even think to ask the Germans whether they felt that way. It's just accepted that Germans *are* Europeans.

The distinction between Europe and Asia began with the Greeks, who contrasted their civilized European selves with the Asian barbarians across the Aegean Sea. Medieval scholars assumed there must be some narrow isthmus separating Europe from Asia. After no such natural feature was found, geographers in the early

modern period seized on the Ural Mountains as the dividing line. But the Urals are not much of a barrier. About the height of the Appalachians, they were easily crossable long before the advent of trains, automobiles, and airplanes. Ukrainian Cossacks invaded Siberia in the late sixteenth century by carrying their riverboats in a brief portage over the Urals.

Though the physical barrier is negligible, the mental barrier has been consequential. Looking backward, we cannot understand world history without the East-West distinction, whatever we may think of it today. That would be like an atheist studying the history of medieval Europe and ignoring Christianity because she is not a believer. But going forward, we must see beyond the notions of East and West that have long divided us. The divisions themselves are arbitrary, and they were created for a world dominated by Europe—a world that is no longer with us.

When Peter the Great ordered his future capital into existence in 1703, he modeled it on Amsterdam, the city that had most impressed him on his secret journey to the West a few years earlier. The diverse, canal-laced Dutch metropolis, with its narrow redbrick town houses built atop wooden piles in the swampy ground, was the richest city in the world, the center of global trade. Peter even gave his city a Dutch name—Sankt Pieter Burkh—to signal its repudiation of Eastern backwardness. By contrast, the Gazprom office building now slated to tower above Putin's hometown—at 1,500 feet, it would be Europe's tallest skyscraper—looks east for inspiration, to Dubai, the gilded, garish cosmopolitan hub where its Petersburg-born architect launched his career. In America's burgeoning Chinatowns, high-rise buildings that stack offices atop karaoke parlors atop restaurants atop shopping malls bring the distinctive urbanism of twenty-first-century China to the United States, just as Americans brought their architecture to their Shanghai concession 150 years earlier. As we see with Art Deco, which was born in Paris but left its most lasting imprints on Miami Beach and Mumbai, in a porous world styles can transcend their birthplaces. And in this Asian Century, no doubt, forms originating in Asia will be imported to—or perhaps even foisted on—the West. The hope, however, is that as Asia rises, the thinking-makes-it-so distinction between East and West will fade, that we will move ourselves from rivalry and resentment to amity and understanding.

At first glance, the Chinese boomtown of Shenzhen does not inspire much hope. The instant metropolis of 14 million people and counting seems a self-inflicted redux of the

most imitative aspects of nineteenth-century Shanghai, a city built by the imperial powers of Britain, France, and the United States to look just like home, right down to the American Settlement's bustling commercial spine, Broadway. Among Shenzhen's most visible structures is a 1:3 scale replica of the Eiffel Tower, less innovative even than Jazz Age Shanghai's "Big Ching," the knockoff Big Ben the British erected atop the customs house. In a downtown park, a massive photomontage shows Shenzhen's founder, Deng Xiaoping, the Communist ruler who in his youth had traveled to France "to learn knowledge and truth from the West in order to save China," admiring the skyline, complete with fake Parisian tower. The grandfatherly Deng keeps a straight face; Western visitors taking in the display typically do not.

The Eiffel Tower is the centerpiece of a Shenzhen theme park called Window of the World, which offers visitors scaled-down replicas of all the globe's architectural masterpieces. *SEE THE WORLD LANDMARKS IN ONE DAY!* crows a poster on the ticket booth. The park embodies contemporary China at its tawdriest. Guests who grow bored of the park's architectural wonders can amuse themselves by renting human-size clear plastic hamster balls, locking themselves in, and taking a spin on a man-made lake.

And yet the theme park is surprisingly moving. Although its Eiffel Tower is the most famous attraction, the park gives the wonders of Asia, including Angkor Wat and the Taj Mahal, equal billing with the monuments of the West. And at its Washington, D.C., monuments, the plaque for the 1:15 scale Lincoln Memorial reads: *COMPLETED IN 1922, THIS WHITE MARBLE BUILDING RESEMBLES THE PARTHENON OF GREECE*—a humbling reminder that the United States, too, like Germany and Rome, consciously wrote itself into the Western tradition. Placing all the world's architectural wonders on an equal platform breaks down the distinctions between peoples and inspires in visitors a cosmopolitan, human pride. As the Syrian-born MIT architecture professor Nasser Rabbat has observed:

[A]ll architecture is the heritage of all people, although some architecture is the heritage of some people more so than others. It's only a question of degree. But there is no exclusionary architecture that says that you do not belong.

The Russia section of the Window of the World park includes a miniature Hermitage, but it is the sculpture garden, set off in a quiet green section of the park away from the crowds, that holds the copy of that museum's storied masterpiece, the Jean-Antoine Houdon sculpture of



Swimming, Smoking, Crying, a painting by Dana Schutz, whose work is currently on view at the Denver Art Museum.

Voltaire commissioned by Catherine the Great. In the heart of Deng Xiaoping's city of skyscrapers sits the elderly *philosophe*, draped in a robe, his aged face enlightened by his mercurial grin. The awkward English of the plaque reads:

AUTHOR: ANTOINE HOUDON

IMITATOR: DA LIUSHENG

VOLTAIRE WAS THE SPIRITUAL LEADER IN THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT. THE STATUE REFLECTS THE HUMOROUS AND HARSH INDIVIDUALITIES OF THIS SAGACIOUS PHILOSOPHER WHO HAD TO ENDURE MANY HARDSHIPS.

Voltaire, the hardship-enduring dissident, stares out silently at the "people's democratic

dictatorship" all around him. From the grin Houdon captured so masterfully and Da Liusheng channeled so proficiently, it would seem that Voltaire appreciates the humor of the situation.

Catherine the Great had Houdon's Voltaire banished to an attic after the French Revolution. But she could never fully exorcize his spirit. Even at the height of Stalin's repression, the little marble man sitting in the Hermitage never lost the wry smile on his face. He continues to haunt Putin's Petersburg today. That a copy of him now silently haunts Shenzhen as well is an auspicious omen for our Asian Century.

[Adaptation]

EMPIRE FALLS

From Responding to Climate Change in New York State, a November 2011 report prepared for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Rising sea levels and extreme weather patterns due to global warming are believed to have increased the risk of flooding in parts of the state, which was hit by Hurricane Sandy in October.

Sea-level-rise projections of five, twelve, and twenty-three inches at Manhattan's Battery for the 2020s, 2050s, and 2080s would result in four, sixteen, and 136 moderate flooding events each year, respectively. Under a rapid ice-melt scenario, New York State could experience between 200 and 275 moderate flooding events each year by 2080.

Many wastewater-treatment plants are located in floodplains, since this often coincides with a topographic low point and sewage can be conveyed to the plant by gravity. Raising the facility by several feet may prevent severe inundation.

Severe water shortages in western states, which are likely to become worse with climate change, may shift populations to eastern states, including New York. If so, New York could experience new population and economic growth with an associated increased demand for water.

Upland areas may experience gentrification. Retreat from the southern coast of Long Island, for example, may displace households, increase housing demand, and push up property values, a process that may indirectly burden the low-income population.

In 2007, dairy products were ranked as the top agricultural commodity in New York State, representing more than half of the state's total farm receipts. As average temperatures increase, milk output is likely to decrease, in particular among high-producing herds with substantially greater sensitivity to heat stress. By the 2050s, heat stress on cows is predicted to generate notable losses unless cooling systems are in place.

Park vegetation will potentially require more water, fertilizer, and pesticides. The increased costs of maintenance could exacerbate differences in quality of park vegetation between wealthy and non-wealthy areas.

Ski operations that are smaller and less well capitalized or more southerly and at lower altitude may have more difficulty keeping up with increasing demands on snowmaking capacity. Larger establishments are more likely to be able to afford measures for spreading risk, such as taking advantage of new markets for weather derivatives.

Apples may be particularly vulnerable to climate change. Although climate warming will provide some opportunities to grow longer-season varieties (Fuji, Granny Smith), it may also mean that some of the state's cool-season signature varieties (McIntosh and Empire) will no longer be commercially viable.

Very large bridges tend to sag during extreme heat. Sea levels will rise, and modern ships often stack containers to use as much clearance as is available, so new height limitations may have to be imposed.

Airports located in coastal areas at low elevation (e.g., LaGuardia, Newark, JFK) are all vulnerable to coastal storm-surge flooding amplified over time by sea-level rise. Existing flood-protection levees may have to be raised, to the extent compatible with the clearance height required for takeoffs and landings.

Some runways may need to be lengthened, since hotter air provides less lift and hence requires higher speeds for safe takeoff and landing.

The New York State Department of Health should consider updating and possibly enlarging its stockpile of drought-emergency equipment.

[Timeline]

FIEND REQUEST

From comments on the Facebook page of the Jefferson County, Alabama, sheriff's office, posted last January in response to a photo of Dustin McCombs, who was wanted on charges of rape. Each week, the sheriff's office posts a photograph of a wanted suspect under the title "Creep of the Week." McCombs was apprehended in Ohio shortly after his picture was posted.

BRITTANY REED: wow I KNOW HIM! from school at Jordan!

AMANDA HOLLIS: this guy is a jerk but I would have never thought he would have done this

JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (JCSO):

Folks please understand that he has not been found guilty of anything. He is wanted on that charge. Until he is PROVEN guilty he is presumed innocent.

KATIE DRISKELL: This is complete crap. Anyone who knows Dusty knows he would never ever ever hurt anyone this way.

DUSTIN MCCOMBS: good thing i moved out of state

JCSO: Doesn't matter where you moved the warrant calls for nationwide extradition. You will be brought back to Alabama to stand trial. Please turn yourself in. It will be easier on you and your family.

MCCOMBS: haha for an unfair trial, that yall claim to be a fair trial, i will do that as soon as i retain myself a lawyer so you guys just hold your horses, can i turn myself in to st clair county, i hear its nicer over there

JCSO: Dustin, that is a very good idea. I think you should retain yourself a lawyer and follow his advice. The warrant we have came from Shelby County, you can turn yourself in there.

JEN MCCOMBS: Dusty, I think this is not the place to hash all of this out. Everything you say is public record and can be used against you. These are very serious charges true or not. You need to do the right thing, hire an attorney, and get it taken care of. Running from it will do nothing but cause you harm little brother. I do disagree with using the term creep of the week how degrading and honestly what happened to innocent until proven guilty?

MICHAEL SPINKS: LOL Child Sex Offenders get more privacy then this guy, wow, fail in the law system here.

MCCOMBS: my intentions once i retain a lawyer is to surrender. want to have everything lined up so i will actually have a chance at a fair trial. and i believe it just may be considered defamation of character, you know the whole "creep of the week" title

ASHLEY HAYS: This is better than an episode of cops!

MCCOMBS: lol well i figure i might as well use the computer all i can now, i dont think they let you bring a laptop inside jail.

JOSHUA BRUCE: Dustin, be a man and face the courts. By running it seems you are guilty. If you're innocent you wouldn't be on facebook

MCCOMBS: ooh because im on facebook makes me a rapist, well in that case theres like 3 million rapists here in america, including you

JOSH JOHNSTON: I vote for a trial via Facebook. The jury can deliberate on Skype.

MCCOMBS: im just going to clarify, i have never raped, or ever plan on raping anyone, ever. its all a huge misunderstanding

BLAKE HUGHLEY: who did u rape dirty-d? (thats dustins nickname that I just gave him)

FREEDIRTY DEE: Dustin the support has arrived!! Taking suggestions of how to raise the bail money!!

DRISKELL: RAPE TRIALS ARE BASED ON HEARSAY! There is no evidence, but there is evidence that he did not do it and the lawyer

[Simulation]

GREENHOUSE RULES

From the instruction manual for Catan: Oil Springs, a scenario-expansion kit for the board game The Settlers of Catan. Developed by the Worldwatch Institute and the game's manufacturers, the scenario was introduced in October 2011 at a gaming convention in Essen, Germany. A "hex" is a hexagonal territory of the game board.

During your turn, you can convert one oil into two non-oil resources of your choosing. Alternatively, you may choose to forgo the usage of oil, sacrificing some growth for increased environmental security and the prestige of being a sustainability leader. The first player to have sequestered three oils gains the "Champion of the Environment" token.

For every five oils used, an environmental disaster results. Roll the two six-sided dice to determine where disaster strikes. If a seven is rolled, a natural disaster triggered by climate change floods the coasts. Settlements bordering a sea are removed from the board, and cities are reduced to settlements. Roads are not affected. A metropolis (because of its seawalls and other advanced design) is also not affected. If any other number is rolled, industrial pollution has struck. If the affected hex does not contain an oil spring, remove the production-number token from the hex. That hex no longer produces resources.

If the fifth number token is removed from one of the hexes, flooding has overwhelmed Catan and all inhabitants are forced to abandon the island, thus ending the game. While no player truly wins, the player who currently holds the Champion of the Environment token is recognized by the international community for his/her efforts to mitigate climate change and is granted the most attractive land on a neighboring island to resettle.



"Svetlaya/The luminous one," a photograph by Ira Alaeva, whose work was on view last summer at the Center for Arts and Music, in St. Petersburg, Russia.

COURTESY THE ARTIST AND FOTODEPARTMENT FOUNDATION, ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

has got it. =) Just to let you know, he is turning himself in once the lawyer gets everything ready. =)

JCSO: Katie, that is great news. So, is there any chance you will turn yourself in on outstanding warrants?

DRISKELL: I don't have warrants ... haha. I have never done anything wrong to have a warrant.

JCSO: Yes Katie you have two warrants under your full name and date of birth.

DRISKELL: For what? I just checked it at the court-house Friday.

JCSO: Not sure who you spoke to at the court-house but, you have two outstanding warrants. Email if you would like the specifics.

ROBERT BURGERKING: is this thread also where we can ask questions to the man and get answers and stuff? cuz i have a friend who sells the sticky icky and wuz thinkin what is the most he can get caught wit and not go to jail?

CURTIS STEPHENS: this is fake right?

[Fragments]

ELEVEN ORPHANS

From a selection of openings to abandoned short stories by Zsuzsi Gartner included in *Five Dials* number 25. As part of an ongoing project, Gartner issues adoption certificates to readers who request to "adopt" the fragments. Her short-story collection *Better Living Through Plastic Explosives* was published last month by Pintail.

THE TIME I TRIED

Then there was the time I tried to get my life made into a television series but failed. Everything ordinary happened to be in great demand. "Let's hear what the ordinary people have to say," that anchorman, the one everyone trusted, would say.

KARL

You would think they'd talk about money all the time. That's what you'd think. All the time, endlessly, like a broken record, nonstop, ad nauseam, *infinitus spiritus amen*. But they don't. They talk about anything but. You have to make them sometimes. Get them to confront the incredible magnitude of their good fortune. Shove their faces into the enormity of it. But gently.

That's Karl's job.

SPERM DONOR

The first time he saw the child he was startled that the boy looked nothing like him. My son.

CORNER OFFICE

Things were supposed to be different with Corner Office, brudder. Just wait 'til Corner Office, I kept telling Twyla as her tears dripped onto the suction line offa li'l Felix's shunt (every so often the generator goes and then it's DIY), everything will be better when I get to Corner Office. If you could see li'l Felix now, with his flappy hands and cruxifying smile, oh your heart would surely urk.

CHASTITY

Sometimes they appear in great bunches, streaming down the street like a circus parade. Sometimes just out of the corner of your eye, when you're not thinking about anything much. The women and their wild beasts. Can't they give it a rest?

The nuns are the worst.

THE THIRD SISTER PART I

The barbarians are chewing. Chew chew chew all summer long. Blood pools on their plates, just the way they like it. The mothers wear halter tops; the fathers take off their watches; we run barefoot in the street, a thick seam of tar

bubbles in the center of the road and sticks to our feet. There are no boys on this block, except for spindly Johnny Falconi, who hides his shovel teeth behind his mother's orange curtains. Girls run rampant; no boy could survive here. We run low to the ground, knees bent, hands dragging like monkeys so that they don't see us. They are the barbarians. We see them through their haze of cigarettes and BBQ smoke and choked laughter. We watch our backs.

AFTER ALMODÓVAR

What grown man can say that he married his own mother, and that although heartbreak was involved, no one disapproved?

[Inventory]

THE WORST OF SPINES

From an 1851 "list of imitation book-backs" sent by Charles Dickens to a London bookbinder, who fabricated mock books with the fake titles. The New York Public Library re-created part of Dickens's collection for its current exhibition *Charles Dickens: The Key to Character*.

Five Minutes in China
Forty Winks at the Pyramids
Mr. Green's Overland Mail
A Carpenter's Bench of Bishops
Toot's Universal Letter-Writer
Doweaister's Complete Calculator
History of the Middling Ages
Jonah's Account of the Whale
Captain Parry's Virtues of Cold Tar
Kant's Ancient Humbugs
Bowwowdom. A Poem.
The Quarrelly Review
The Art of Cutting the Teeth
On the Use of Mercury by the Ancient Poets
Drowsy's Recollections of Nothing
Heavyside's Conversations with Nobody
Commonplace Book of the Oldest Inhabitant
Growler's Gruffiology, with Appendix
The Books of Moses and Sons
Teazer's Commentaries
Miss Biffin on Deportment
Morrison's Pills Progress
Lady Godiva on the Horse
Munchausen's Modern Miracles
Richardson's Show of Dramatic Literature
Hansard's Guide to Refreshing Sleep



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND DAVID ZWIRNER NEW YORK CITY/LONDON

Allo! I, a painting by Luc Tuymans, whose work was exhibited last November at David Zwirner, in London.

ST. ELIZABETH OF THE MIRACLE OF THE ROSES

Anastasia Nagy is on a rampage. The boy—honestly he's just a boy—they've chosen to play Zoltan is horribly unsuitable. It's like casting Macaulay Culkin to play Heathcliff. She claims she can see the peach fuzz still gleaming on his cheeks. She writes fire and they give her green fruit! She burns up the telephone lines and is truly inconsolable.

THE BBQ NUN

She came to us from Kansas City with smoke in her habit, shorn hair glinting copper. She came with her guitar and her firm belief in penance and her expertise in all things eschatological, although the latter was more of a private preoccupation than a part of her duties at Sacred Heart. She came with her talk of judgment, but there was always a kind of smile on her face, and she even made the idea of hellfire seem like fun.

THE THIRD SISTER PART II

The third sister, with her bare skull like a crystal ball, but milky blue. When Betty and Lydia want to touch it she makes them pay. Sometimes in pennies, in blood.

LAWN BOY

They say that if a house is on fire and a woman has to choose between her child and another—her husband, her lover—she will choose the child.

What if I told you I would choose differently?
What do you think of me now?

[Accounting]

CLASS STRUGGLE

From almost 2,000 comments about student loans sent to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and released on its website last June. Americans currently owe more than \$1 trillion in outstanding student loans.

I am the president of the New Hampshire Academy of Audiology, voted by my patients as Northeast Hearing Care Professional of the Year. As a doctor who washes dishes at a restaurant in

her spare time to make ends meet, it is really hard to tell future audiologists to “stick with it.”

Psychologists save lives. We prevent suicides and homicides. Yet there are no loan-forgiveness programs for us, aside from selling our soul to live in a tent to help the poor with no guarantee loans will even be paid.

I am currently repaying over \$200,000 in student-loan debt accumulated during undergraduate study and law school. After graduation, I had to turn down offers to work in the White House because I simply could not afford to do so.

After six years in the military as a physician, my bonuses reached a level where I could afford to pay my loans. Since then I have only been able to get the balance down to about \$95,000. I have served with the Special Forces and put myself in dangerous situations for my country multiple times. I have served three combat tours. Yet I am enslaved by my student debt at a level of about twice what I borrowed. I feel betrayed by my government.

I borrowed \$65,000 for medical school. By the time I completed my residency in psychiatry my loan balance was well over \$200,000 because of the 20-plus percent interest Chase charged me while I was still in training. I have made minimum payments for over twenty years. My current student-loan balance is \$580,000. In another ten years, my balance will approach \$1 million!

With interest and penalties, my student-loan debt is now over \$300,000. I drive a thirty-two-year-old vehicle. A recent hospitalization combined with the hardship caused by student loan garnishment forced me to give up my home. Without any other choices, I continue to work, disabled and homeless. I assume that when my vehicle stops running and I can no longer commute, I will also lose my employment.

My legal education was very expensive—the total federal and private loans total more than \$160,000. After graduation, I took out a bar study loan from Citibank for \$12,000 at 11.875% interest. I applied for dozens of jobs. I got one interview. After a few bleak months, I was selling my personal property to pay rent and to buy food. With no prospects, I decided to open up my own practice. I worked for myself for a year, scratching out a living and making ends meet with the help of food stamps.

When I was nineteen I had no credit, but I searched the Internet looking for student loans based upon something other than credit. One

was MyRichUncle.com, which promises private student loans without consideration of credit score. The company has since filed Chapter 7. Now I cannot find the account anywhere except for on my credit report, and it continues to grow exponentially. I have no idea what the interest rate is, and I have not yet found a way to make payments.

I have a government loan, but I suppose because I’m a woman I’m not allowed to receive any kind of pay that would ever be sustainable in this shit world. I have a degree, but it’s useless to my financial needs. It’s a fucking joke. I’ll be thirty-five in April, and I want to fucking kill myself because of money. Thanks a fucking lot for goddamned nothing.

[Manners]

OPERATION DESSERT STORM

From source material quoted by al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, an eleventh-century scholar, in his humorous survey of Islamic scholarship concerning uninvited guests. Selections from the Art of Party-Crashing in Medieval Iraq, abridged and translated from the Arabic by Emily Selove, was recently published by Syracuse University Press.

The *tufayli* enters a party uninvited. The word is derived from the root *tafala*, which refers to the encroaching darkness of nighttime on the day.

Someone called a *tufayli* goes to banquets uninvited. They are named after Tufayl, a man from Kufa of the Banu Ghatafan, who was called “Tufayl of the grooms and brides.”

Once a man crashed another man’s party. “Who are you?” the host asked him. “I’m the one who saved you the trouble of sending an invitation!” he replied.

A party crasher couldn’t get into a wedding, so he took one of his shoes and hid it in his sleeve and hung the other from his arm, and then he got a toothpick and borrowed a dirty dish from the perfumer. He dipped the toothpick in the dish and stuck it in his teeth, then went running back to the gatekeeper as if in a big hurry. He said to him, “I ate with the first table at the banquet because I had to leave early for work, and in my hurry I took one of my shoes and for-

got the other. Could you please bring it out to me?" The gatekeeper said, "I'm too busy. Go in and get it yourself." So the party crasher went in and ate, and then he left again.

[Anecdote]

POLIVANOV'S DREAM

From a response by the Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky (1893–1984) to a question by Serena Vitale, during an interview in Moscow in December 1978. Yevgeni Polivanov, who like Shklovsky was a member of the literary group Opoyaz in the 1920s, was accused of spying for Japan and was executed in 1938 during the Stalinist purge. Shklovsky: Witness to an Era, a collection of Vitale's interviews with the critic, was recently published by Dalkey Archive Press. Vitale is a professor of Russian literature at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, in Milan. Translated by Jamie Richards.

Yevgeni Polivanov had only one hand. He'd lost the other when he was young—to imitate a character from *The Brothers Karamazov*, he lay on the tracks as a train passed over. And the train severed his hand. We became great friends. He was a brilliant man. He told me that one day, at the university, as he was listening to a lecture half asleep, his head back, suddenly he felt something like a jolt to his brain—and, he said, from that day on he began to understand languages. He knew twenty or so. On the street he could speak to the Gypsies in their tongue; he knew Korean, Chinese, Turkish, Japanese, and other, smaller languages. After the revolution he became a Communist, working for the Comintern. He had a dream: to create a table of all the languages, like Mendeleev's. Unfortunately, this truly exceptional man learned to smoke opium in the Orient. After a certain point even that wasn't enough—he began eating it. And he told me that he found it absurd that people could spend their money on anything other than opium. He was an unbelievable character: one time, he went to the university to present, if I remember correctly, his doctoral thesis. He came to the classroom in a coat but no pants, just underwear. Everybody at the university knew him, so they let it slide. He began to speak; halfway through they told him he'd said enough, but he replied: "Dear colleagues and professors, please allow me to continue. I don't think you've understood anything yet." The presentation went well, and he was awarded his degree.

Once a party crasher walked into the house of a man who had invited a gathering of people. "Hey you!" the man said. "Did I say you could come?" "Did you say I couldn't come?" the party crasher replied.

I heard Isa ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Khalid ask Ibn Darraj, whose head was narrow, "Why is your head so narrow?" "From doing battle with gates," he said, by which he meant that his head had been pressed between a wall and a gate.

The people who most deserve to be slapped are those who come to eat without being invited, and the people who most deserve to be slapped twice are those who, when the host of the party says, "Sit here," reply, "No! I'm going to sit over there!" And the people who most deserve to be slapped three times are those who, when invited to eat, say to the owner of the house, "Call your wife in here to eat with us!"

Once al-Ma'mun heard of ten heretics among the people of Basra and commanded that they be brought to him. They were being gathered together when a party crasher caught sight of the group and said, "What could they possibly be gathered for except a feast!" He slipped into their midst, and the guards herded them along to the prison boat. "A pleasure cruise!" the party crasher said, and got on the boat with the rest. It wasn't a moment before they were all in shackles, the party crasher included. "Look what my party crashing has amounted to!" he said. "Shackles!"

[Song]

RUSSIAN UNORTHODOX

From Natasha, Pierre, & the Great Comet of 1812, an electropop opera by Dave Malloy based on Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace, which ran last fall at Ars Nova in New York City.

PIERRE: There's a war going on / Out there somewhere / And Andrey isn't here.

ALL: There's a war going on / Out there somewhere / And Andrey isn't here / And this is all in your program / You are at the opera / Gonna have to study up a little bit / If you wanna keep with the plot / 'Cuz it's a complicated Russian novel / Everyone's got nine different names / But look it up in your

program/We'd appreciate it, thanks a lot/Da da da/Da da da/Da da da/Natasha!

NATASHA: Natasha is young/She loves Andrey with all her heart.

ALL: She loves Andrey with all her heart/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here.

SONYA: Sonya is good/Natasha's cousin and closest friend.

ALL: Natasha's cousin and closest friend/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here.

MARYA: Marya is old-school, a grande dame of Moscow/Natasha's godmother, strict yet kind.

ALL: Natasha's godmother, strict yet kind/Marya is old-school/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here/And this is all in your program/You are at the opera/Chandeliers and corsets/The war can't touch us here/And it's a complicated Russian novel/Everyone's got nine different names/But look it up in your program/We'd appreciate it, thanks a lot/Da da da/Da da da/Da da da/Anatole!

ANATOLE: Anatole is hot/He spends his money on women and wine.

ALL: He spends his money on women and wine/Anatole is hot/Marya is old-school/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here.

HÉLÈNE: Hélène is a slut/Anatole's sister, married to Pierre.

ALL: Anatole's sister, married to Pierre/Hélène is a slut/Anatole is hot/Marya is old-school/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here.

DOLOKHOV: Dolokhov is fierce, but not too important/Anatole's friend, a crazy good shot.

ALL: Anatole's friend, a crazy good shot/Dolokhov is fierce/Hélène is a slut/Anatole is hot/Marya is old-school/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here/And this is all in your program/You are at the opera/Gonna have to study up a little bit/If you wanna keep with the plot/'Cuz it's a complicated Russian novel/Everyone's got nine different names/But look it up in your program/We'd appreciate it, thanks a lot/Da da da/Da da da/Da da da/Minor characters!

BOLKONSKY: Old Prince Bolkonsky is crazy.

MARY: And Mary is plain.

MARY & BOLKONSKY: Andrey's family, totally messed up.

BALAGA: And Balaga's just for fun!

ALL: Balaga's just for fun!/Balaga is fun/Bolkonsky is crazy/Mary is plain/Dolokhov is fierce/Hélène is a slut/Anatole is hot/Marya is old-school/Sonya is good/Natasha is young/And Andrey isn't here/And what about Pierre?/Dear, bewildered, and awkward Pierre?/What about Pierre?/Rich, unhappily married Pierre?/What about Pierre?/What about Pierre?/What about Pierre?

[Debate]
HELP!

From comments on the Wikipedia entry for the Beatles. Last fall, Wikipedia conducted a community-wide poll to settle the below dispute, which began in 2004. Users voted for lowercase "the."

I was under the impression that within a sentence, the "the" in front of a group name does not need to be capitalized. You wouldn't write, "I really like The Beatles."

They were "The" Beatles not "Beatles," like "The" Kinks. "The" Who, not the "Who."

I realize that, but when referring to a group within a sentence it's not necessary to capitalize the "the" portion of the name.

There is no difference in grammar: *all names* must have capital letters.

If there's no difference in grammar, then why are all my professionally edited Beatles books consistently "wrong" in this respect? I refuse to believe a bunch of hobby editors at a website would know better than professionally trained and well-paid editors at a publishing house. Here's evidence: the Beatles' biography at RollingStone.com, AllMusic.com, Encyclopaedia Britannica.

I have checked the entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and their entry "the Beatles" is incorrect.

I'm not an English major, but the way I see it, "The Beatles" should be used whenever you are referring to the group as a whole. I also think "Beatles" may be considered a word on its own, used to describe individual members ("George was a Beatle") and things that are related to The Beatles.

It is standard practice when determining usage to allow those whose logo it is to make such determinations. If The Beatles capitalize the "T," then a capital T it is.

Listen, you whining poms, don't pin this kerfuffle on UK/US differences, okay? I'm all in favor of "The" rather than "the."

Alright, I think consensus is clear. It's The Beatles, so let's make it project policy.

I have a MA in Modern English Language and am a former proofreader and copy editor and current music editor for Amazon.com. In my professional work we *never* capitalize the "the" in band names, *never ever*.

Are you on the windup or what? What makes "The" less important than "Beatles"?

It's an article.

I don't feel anyone will convince you that you are wrong, so go and find someone else to play with, son. I'm very bored with you. Bye-bye.

I must say I find your attitude interesting, as I've done my best not to insult you here. I don't see why you are trying to do that to me.

Never mind articles or websites. Just take a look at Ringo's bass drum. At least HE knew what their name was!

From the band's album covers, it's not obvious that they considered the word "The" an essential part of their name. Note that the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* shows the band name as "BEATLES."

This whole nonissue is a bunch of hairsplitting.

While a few folks fastidiously change "the" to "The" when the word "Beatles" follows, REGARDLESS OF THE CONTEXT OR HOW MANY TIMES THE NAME HAS ALREADY BEEN MENTIONED AND/OR CAPITALIZED, this is not done with *any other band*. This is time- and space-wasting, not to mention a bit hypocritical.

Did someone ask for an expert in British English? I have had nineteen years in publishing and editing, and I have to agree with my American colleague above. And if the copy editors who worked on books are wrong, and if the Amazon.com editor is wrong, and if I am wrong, then why even seek the opinions of professionals here? Among professionals, it does appear the lowercase usage outnumbers the capitalized one; it is only among amateurs that the professional usage is slammed! So let the pros be wrong. In which case Ringo Starr's site, which uses lowercase, must also be wrong. George doesn't seem to mention it. John Lennon's people must be wrong on their official site. Brian Epstein's site is wrong. Only Paul McCartney capitalizes.

I mean (heh-heh, see?), I could have gone farther, or further, mounting a montage of even more ems, or, if you insist, em's.

Dub it my bearing, my engaging existence at what is judged to be a depth deep enough but not so sheer that ostentation ensues. To be sure, taking the flyer down, as I had just done in the course of my stroll back (in return, as in effectuating a ritornello) from the bakery, ripping the big sheet of paper from where it had been plastered to the lamppost, made me a degree uneasy on this score.

Was the deed too showy?

What were the chances I was being observed?

I do not believe neighbors—residents of my building, that is; tenants, that is, legitimated denizens enjoying the privileges of tenancy herein—saw me at it: to wit, my exerting no little effort to rid the streetscape of the big sheet of paper without my rending it into pieces, and then (failing at this, failing not thoroughly but discoverably clownishly at this) to remove the duct tape that was wound around the topmost and bottommost margins of the thing, tethering the whole of it—a poster, a poster!—to the lamppost with, as the poet has proposed, a vengeance.

Yes, perfect, perfect!—that's the fashion to express it—vengeance, vengeance—vindictively.

The bastards.

Oh, I imagine the doorman must have caught me at it, mustn't he? For he was there when I, not many strides from home, maneuvered to aim myself toward him, this worthy's massive hand on the brasswork, the whole of him at the ready to see to it that his master's motion not be made tardive as I glided past the good fellow into the lobby and thus into the warmed air thereinward, gaining ground ever so fluidly onwards and, thereafterwards, whilst awaiting the arrival of the elevator, calling out to the chap, perhaps a dot too cheerily, "Ferdy, have I greeted you on this merry Flag Day of ours? If not, then to you, Ferdy, I say let this day be savored as the merriest of them—i.e., Flag Days—ever, that is!"

Alas, the cunning son-of-a-bitch must have seen me at it.

Jesus Christ, what now?

Too late, too late!—the big sheet of paper crushed into parts—hidden, hooray, successfully hidden!—squeezed, as the ghastly shreds were, down into the crease of my coat pocket, a grand patch-pocket affair commodious to a fault. Whereas to the other side of myself, employing no more than the chilled tips of my fingers, I held aloft, ever so deftly, the loop of the sack in which were composed the bran muffins I had gone to collect from the pastry shop so popular in this particular (hmm, particular!) precinct of ours.

Wretchedly sorry.

Did it again—the pee's repeated.

Really, it is the awfulest tic, I do actually quite admit it.

[Fiction]

KNOWLEDGE

By Gordon Lish, from the fall 2012 issue of *Salmagundi*. A new edition of Lish's novel *Peru* (1986) will be published next month by Dalkey Archive Press.

I do not have to do this, you know. It is not mandated by government, you know. Nothing forces me to say what I will—or shall!—you know. It is, rather, my means of giving back to "the" community, of one's seeking to perform usefully, even munificently, in the—well—in the modest manner that might, on occasion, by a dues-paying member of mankind, be accomplished.

Like the alliteration I just indulged myself in.



Expulsion from the Garden of Eden (after Thomas Cole), a painting by Adam Cvijanovic, whose work was on view last October at Postmasters Gallery, in New York City.

Oh, how not to concede that sometimes—nay, “oftentimes, oftentimes”—(as the crude, as the untutored, as the reader cannot yourself but have noted, have lately taken to saying)—if, if, if there is to be parsed the natural policy of this reported reflex of mine, this, you do see, from the lowlier view, there is thereby to be beheld, it is granted, a practice vicious, murderous—for the sake of the effect (i.e., for effect’s sake)—or (sake be cursed!) for worse?

At all events, I am restored to my habitation now: bran muffins, not yet unpacked, resting in their sack on the kitchen table, I seated (or situated) on this frail stool, inscribing for your entertainment the day’s prescribed confession, concession, you—this is the United States of America!—choose.

For this is what this is.

And so forth and so on.

Did I, Gordon Lish, have anything to do with the matter mentioned on the flyer? Or, then, call it “public notice,” if you wish.

Rhyme, rogue rhyme—hah!
(Not entirely, isn’t it, un-akin to “ah-hah”?)
The very thought, the very idea, the very
thing of such a thing—willikers!

Let us first recognize that it has been years since the era when I was other than a mere pedestrian. The “public notice,” howsoever, if you still will, appertains to a “motorcycle accident,” does it not? By Jupiter, dearest forerunners in the celestial circle—a motorcycle accident, oooo, brrr.

There is no comma between ATTENTION and PLEASE READ. Nor is “occurred” spelt correctly in the sentence WE ARE LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT THAT OCCURED THIS PAST SUNDAY IN THIS AREA.

Do you see?

Look again.

Make certain you have seen.

“Occurred” is not spelt like that, is it?

Well, for your information, it's not.

Plus the lack of a comma between ATTENTION and PLEASE READ—it's a fucking flouting of the fucking rule—revealed, revealed!—unless the unruly, behind my back, have long since prevailed at what the tireless mob of them will never cease to resolve to come to prevail at—at, namely, at an undermining; at, namely, at a conniving, this with the overruling of the

enfeebled estate of sense—the filth, the filth!—forever asquat upon their program to bolix the shit out of whatever they've yet to bolix the shit out of, whenever for even a whipstitch a person's all too trusting humanistical bent has been turned away from the thuggery currently in charge of the forms.

Oh, people!

Why oh why are people so sickening?

Have they no shame?

Old as I am, I am pledged to bring to a graceful denouement my use of the municipal pavement, whatever spirit then remaining to me superbly freed, thank you, for the furtherance of the edifying of the up-to-the-instant class.

Them and their loathsome equi-page.

(Or is it they?)

The rest is rich.

Get this: WE HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

Did you get all that?

Here we go again, every blessed particle of it a promulgation sponsored for what's left of us to go ahead and construe as Gordon Lish's not ungrudging treat. Yes, yes, yes—do please play the forgiving reader and do one more time try it, if only for the giggles and, heigh-ho, the anguish.

Elided commas?

I am counting a total of two of the type, right? WE HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

Then there is a telephone number.

Plus one of those—oh, God!—email devices.

That's it.

The whole story.

Except to ask—for the decency of my community, for its bloody battered decency—shall this cruel business ever be deemed to have come to a proper end, lest, of course, the last of the duct tape be torn from the lamp-post precious steps from where one—no, no, no, from where I—a citizen, a citizen, you do realize!—struggle, struggles—eloquently, with patience and eloquence aforethought—and in perfect innocence—to live?

Besides, since when do I, your duty-bound pedant, venture forth, on a Sunday, to fetch fiber for the bowels?

[Poem]

SPRING MANEUVERS

By A. R. Ammons (1926–2001), from the Summer/Autumn 2012 issue of *Chicago Review*.

If one of these helicopters tried to put down in my yard, the branches of my many maples would splinter the blades into arpeggios or fluffy obbligatos and angle the copter

over so marines or other fatigued figures would spill out of the square doors, eggs plopping out of seaturtles, beads of caviar out of roe, peas out of pods, extrusions

out of extruders, sheep pills out of bleak arrangements, and so forth: caught gangling in the branches or dipped over to the ground by branches or dropped flawed on the

permafrost (winter still on track here) these fatiguées might recover and come after me with rifles bored black (are these guardians mostly ours?) and I would hide behind

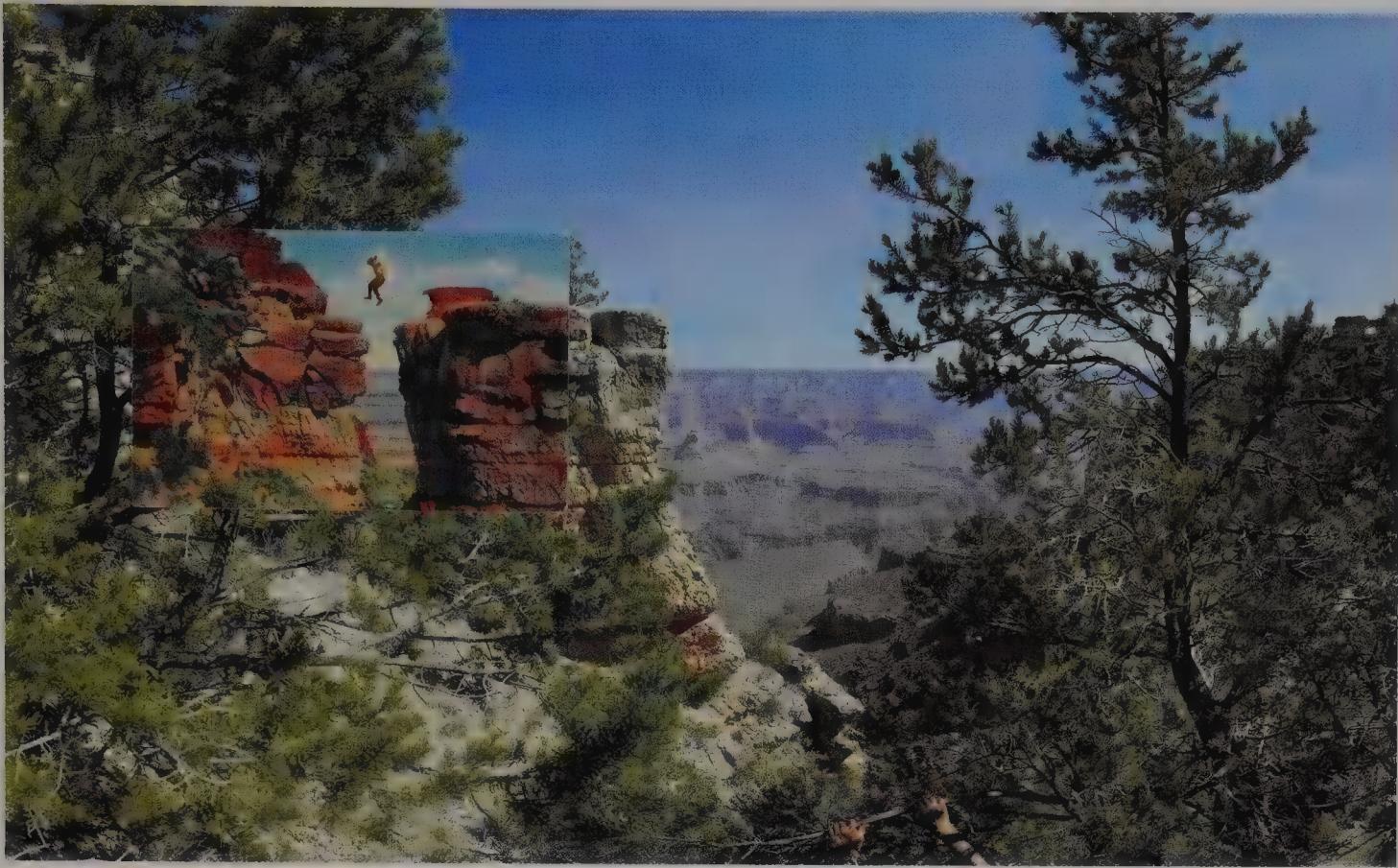
the marble bench and flail them rotten with dead elm limbs when they crept by, or I would jump back and forth behind the elm trunk, marble bench, and brush heap and, making

flubbery sounds, attract them over, when I would bonk their heads or astonish them with a gig in the crotch: thump, thump, thump, thump the whirliwords are all over

the place today, jarring brook bottoms, but I don't care: when copters capsize in my high elmwork and leak fatigued blood, I'm going to have little trenches, a million

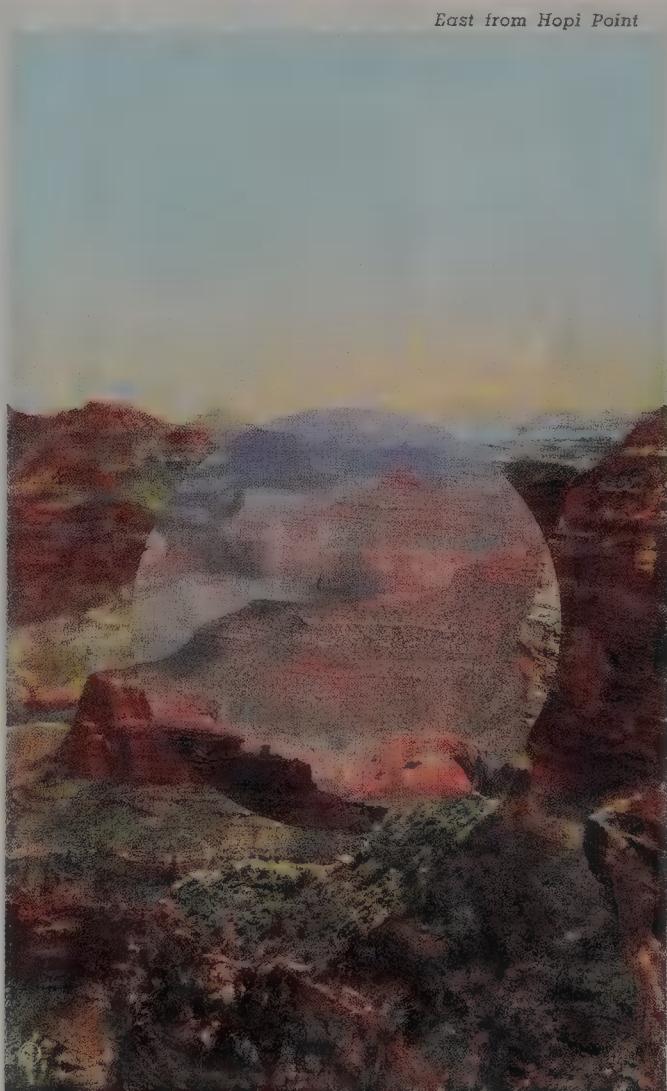
light-years deep, grilled across my yard, each trench sloppy with nits, jumpies, wiggles, and slick stickies that dissolve brogans and reveal meatless anklebone: whatever

there is to be afraid of, I'm afraid of nothing: I'm as prepared as I'll ever be, perfectly, and anything tried around here today is not likely to work out.



East from Hopi Point

East from (Hopi) Rowe Point.



Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

78907-N

Site of a dangerous leap, now overgrown, a digital print inset with a colored postcard (top), and details from Twenty altered postcards, a set of postcards with insets (bottom), by Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe. Their book, *Reconstructing the View: The Grand Canyon Photographs of Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe*, was published in November by the University of California Press.

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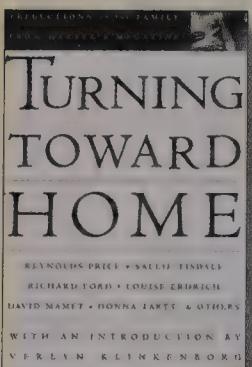
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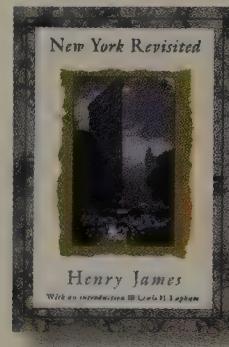
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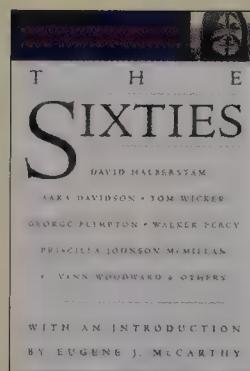
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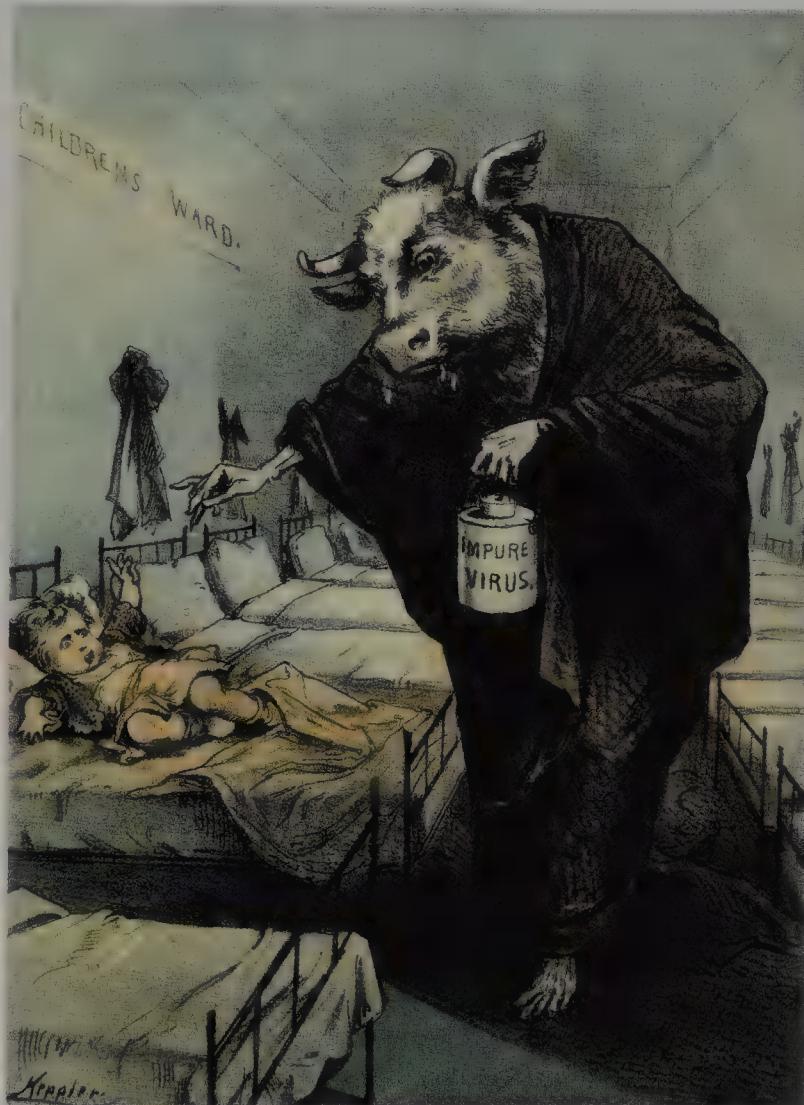
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SENTIMENTAL MEDICINE

Why we still fear vaccines
By Eula Biss

My son is vaccinated, but there is one immunization on the standard schedule he did not receive. This was meant to be his very first shot, the hepatitis B vaccine administered to most infants immediately after birth. I was aware, before I became pregnant, of some fears around vaccination. But I was not prepared for the labyrinthine network of anxieties I would discover during my pregnancy, the proliferation of hypotheses, the minutiae of additives, the diversity of ideologies. Vaccines contain preservatives, adjuvants, and residues from their manufacture. They were developed from aborted fetuses, were tested in Nazi concentration camps, and are not vegan. And vaccines are metaphors, if popular literature on vaccination is to be read as literature, for capitalist corruption, cultural decadence, and environmental pollution.

Eula Biss is the author of *The Balloonists* and *Notes from No Man's Land: American Essays*.



The reach of this subject had exceeded the limits of my late-night research by the time my baby was due, so I visited the pediatrician I had chosen to be my son's doctor. I already knew that some people would consider a medical professional a dubious source of intelligence on vaccination.

The money pharmaceutical companies are pouring into research, they would say, has made the information available to doctors dirty. But not all doctors are informed by research, as I would discover, and there is more than one route to unclean thinking.

When I asked the pediatrician what the purpose of the hep B vaccine was, he answered, "That's a very good question," in a tone I understood to mean this was a question he relished answering. Hep B was a vaccine for the inner city, he told me—it was designed to protect the babies of drug addicts and prostitutes. It was not something, he assured me, that people like me needed to worry about.

All that this doctor knew of me then was what he could see. He assumed, correctly, that I did not live in the inner city. It did not occur to me to clarify that although I live in the outer city of Chicago, my neighborhood looks a lot like what some people mean when they use the euphemism "inner city." In retrospect,

I am ashamed by how little of his racial code I registered. Relieved to be told that this vaccine was not for people like me, I failed to consider what exactly that meant.

The belief that public-health measures are not intended for people like us is widely held by people like me. Public health, we assume, is for people with less—less education, less healthy habits, less access to quality health care, less time and money. I've heard mothers of my class suggest, for instance, that the standard childhood vaccination schedule groups together multiple shots because poor mothers can't visit the doctor frequently enough to get the twenty-six recommended shots separately. (No matter that many mothers, myself included, might find so many visits daunting.) *That*, we seem to be saying of the standard schedule, *is for people like them*.

When the last nationwide smallpox epidemic began in 1898, some people believed that whites were not susceptible to the disease. It was called “nigger itch” or, where it was associated with immigrants, “Italian itch” or “Mexican bump.” When smallpox broke out in New York City, police officers were sent to help enforce the vaccination of Italian and Irish immigrants in the tenements. And when smallpox arrived in Middlesboro, Kentucky, everyone in the black section of town who resisted immunization was vaccinated at gunpoint. These campaigns did limit the spread of the disease, but most of the risk of vaccination, which at that time could lead to infection with other diseases, was absorbed by the most vulnerable. The poor were forced into the service of the privileged.

Debates over vaccination, then as now, were often cast as debates over the integrity of science, though they could just as easily be understood as conversations about power. The working-class people who resisted England's 1853 provision of free, mandatory vaccination were concerned, in part, for their own liberty. Faced with fines, imprisonment, and the seizure of their property if they did not vaccinate their infants,

they sometimes compared their predicament to slavery. In her history of that antivaccination movement, Nadja Durbach returns often to the idea that the resisters saw their bodies “not as potentially contagious and thus dangerous to the social body, but as highly vulnerable to contamination and violation.” Their bodies were, of course, both vulnerable and contagious. But in a time and place where the bodies of the poor were seen as a source of disease, as dangerous to others, it fell to the poor to articulate that they were also vulnerable.

If it was meaningful then for the poor to assert that they were not purely dangerous, I suspect it might be just as meaningful now for the rest of us to accept that we are not purely vulnerable. The middle class may be “threatened,” but we are still, just by virtue of having bodies, dangerous. Even the little bodies of children, which nearly all the thinking common to our time encourages us to imagine as absolutely vulnerable, are dangerous in their ability to spread disease. Think of the unvaccinated boy in San Diego, for instance, who returned from a trip to Switzerland with a case of measles that infected his two siblings, five schoolmates, and four children in his doctor's waiting room. Three of these children were infants too young to be vaccinated, and one of them had to be hospitalized.

Unvaccinated children, according to a 2004 analysis of CDC data, are more likely than undervaccinated children to be white and to live in households with an income of \$75,000 or more—like my child. Their mothers are more likely to be, like me, married and college-educated. Undervaccinated children, meaning children who have received some but not all of their recommended immunizations, are more likely to be black, to have younger, unmarried mothers, and to live in poverty.

“Vaccination works,” my father, a doctor, tells me, “by enlisting a majority in the protection of a minority.” He means the minority of the population that is particularly vul-

nerable to a disease. The elderly, in the case of influenza. Newborns, in the case of pertussis. Pregnant women, in the case of rubella. When relatively wealthy white women choose to vaccinate our children, we may also be participating in the protection of poor black children whose single mothers have not, as a result of circumstance rather than choice, fully vaccinated them. This is a radical inversion of the historical approach to vaccination, which was once just another form of bodily servitude extracted from the poor for the benefit of the privileged. There is some truth now to the idea that public health is not strictly for people like me, but it is through us—literally through our bodies—that public health is maintained.

Vaccination is sometimes implicated in all the crimes of modern medicine. But vaccination was a precursor to modern medicine, not the product of it. Its roots are in folk medicine, and its first practitioners were farmers. Milkmaids in eighteenth-century England had faces unblemished by smallpox, as anyone could see. Common wisdom held that if a milkmaid milked a cow blistered with cowpox and developed some blisters on her hands, she would not contract smallpox even while nursing victims of an epidemic.

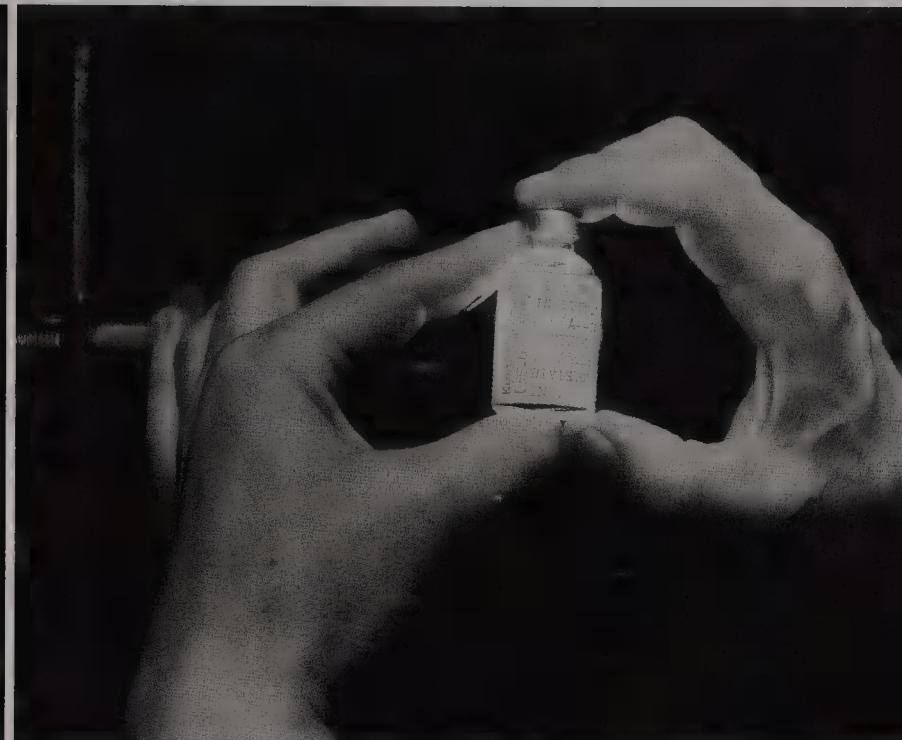
During an outbreak in 1774, a farmer who had himself already been infected with cowpox used a darning needle to force pus from a cow's udder into the arms of his wife and two toddler boys. The farmer's neighbors were horrified. His wife's arm became red and swollen, and she fell ill before recovering from the infection, but the boys had mild reactions. They were exposed to smallpox many times over the course of their long lives, occasionally for the purpose of demonstrating their immunity, without ever contracting the disease.

Twenty years later, the country doctor Edward Jenner scraped pus from a blister on the hand of a milkmaid into an incision on the arm of an eight-year-old boy. The boy did not contract smallpox, and Jenner

continued his experiment on dozens of other people, including his own infant son. Jenner had the evidence to suggest that vaccination worked, but he did not know why it worked. His innovation was based entirely on observation, not on theory. This was a century before the first virus would

When Voltaire wrote his letter "On Inoculation" in 1735, the primary meaning of the English word "inoculate" was still "to set a bud or scion," as apple trees are cultivated by grafting a stem from one tree onto the roots of another. There were many methods of inoculation,

blood can give blood to people with any other type. That's why a person with type O negative is known as a "universal donor." My father then revealed that his blood type was O negative, that he himself was a universal donor. He gave blood, he told me, as often as he could because his



be identified, a century before germ theory would be validated, more than a century before penicillin would be extracted from a fungus, and long before the cause of smallpox would be understood.

The essential mechanism underlying vaccination was not new even in Jenner's time. At that point variolation, the practice of deliberately infecting a person with a minor strain of smallpox in order to prevent infection with a more deadly strain, was still somewhat novel in England but had been practiced in China and India for hundreds of years. (In China, it was said to have been "bestowed by a Taoist immortal.") Variolation would later be brought to America from Africa by a slave. It was then introduced to England by an ambassador's wife, her own face scarred by smallpox, who inoculated her children after observing the practice in Turkey. Voltaire, himself a survivor of a serious case of smallpox, implored the French to adopt variolation from the English.

including the snuffing of powdered scabs and the sewing of an infected thread through the webbing between the thumb and forefinger, but in England it was often accomplished by making a slit or flap in the skin into which infectious material was placed, like the slit in the bark of a tree that receives the young stem grafted onto it. When "inoculate" was first used to describe variolation, it was a metaphor for grafting a disease, which would bear its own fruit, onto the rootstock of the body.

From somewhere deep in my childhood I can remember my father explaining with enthusiasm the principle behind the Doppler effect as an ambulance sped past our car. My father marveled at the world far more often than he talked about the body, but blood types were a subject on which he spoke with some passion. People with the blood type O negative, he explained, can receive in transfusion only blood that is O negative, but people with O-negative

type was always in demand. I suspect my father knew that my blood, too, is type O negative.

I understood the idea of the universal donor more as an ethic than as a medical concept long before I knew my own blood type. But I did not yet think of that ethic as an ingenious filtering of my father's Catholic background through his medical training. I was not raised in the Church and I never took communion, so I was not reminded of Jesus offering of his blood that we all might live. But I believed, even then, that we owe each other our bodies.

The very first decision I made for my son, a decision enacted within moments of his body coming free of mine, was the donation of his umbilical-cord blood to a public bank. I myself had donated blood only once, and I wanted my son to start his life with a credit to the bank, not a debt. And this was before I, the universal donor, would become the recipient of two pints of blood in

a transfusion shortly after my son's birth. Blood of the most precious type, drawn from a public bank.

If we imagine the action of a vaccine not just in terms of how it affects a single body but also in terms of how it affects the collective body of a community, it is fair to think of vaccination as a kind of banking of immunity. Contributions to this bank are donations to those who cannot or will not be protected by their own immunity. This is the principle of "herd immunity," and it is through herd immunity that mass vaccination becomes far more effective than individual vaccination.

Any given vaccine can fail to produce immunity in an individual, and some vaccines, like the influenza vaccine, often fail to produce immunity. But when enough people are given even a relatively ineffective vaccine, viruses have trouble moving from host to host and cease to spread, sparing both the unvaccinated and those in whom vaccination has not produced immunity. This is why the chances of contracting measles can be higher for a vaccinated person living in a largely unvaccinated community than for an unvaccinated person living in a largely vaccinated community.

The boundaries between our bodies begin to dissolve here. Blood and organs move between us, exiting one body and entering another, and so, too, with immunity, which is a common trust as much as it is a private account. Those of us who draw on collective immunity owe our health to our neighbors.

My father has a scar on his left arm from his smallpox vaccination half a century ago. That vaccine was responsible for the worldwide eradication of smallpox in 1980, but it remains far more dangerous than any vaccine currently on our childhood immunization schedule. The risk of death after vaccination for smallpox is, according to one estimate, about one in a million. The risk of hospitalization is about one in a hundred thousand, and the risk of serious complications is about one in a thousand.

Thirty years after routine vacci-

nation for smallpox ended in this country, the federal government asked researchers at the University of Iowa to test the remaining stores of the vaccine for efficacy. This was in the long moment after 9/11 when every potential terrorist attack was anticipated, including the use of smallpox as a biological weapon. The smallpox vaccine proved effective even after having been stored for decades and diluted to increase the supply. But the results of the vaccine trial, says Patricia Winokur, director of the school's Vaccine Research and Education Unit, were "unacceptable by today's standards." A third of the people who received the vaccine suffered fevers or rashes and were sick, in some cases, for several days. Everyone recovered, even those who developed serious inflammations of the heart, but it was clear that the degree of risk was not what we have come to expect from immunization.

The smallpox vaccine contains far more immunizing proteins—more of the active ingredient, so to speak—than any of the vaccines we use today. In that sense, the vaccine our parents received presented a greater challenge to the immune system in one dose than do the twenty-six immunizations for fourteen diseases we now give our children over the course of two years. Still, the proliferation of childhood vaccines has become, for some of us, symbolic of American excess. Too much, too soon, one of the slogans of vaccine activism, could easily be a critique of just about any aspect of our modern lives.

When asked by his colleagues to address the question of whether too many vaccines are given too early in life, the University of Pennsylvania pediatrics professor Paul Offit set out to quantify the capabilities of the infant immune system, which was already known to be quite impressive. Infants, after all, are exposed to an onslaught of bacteria the moment they leave the womb, even before they exit the birth canal. Any infant who does not live in a bubble is likely to find the everyday work of fighting off infections more taxing than pro-

cessing weakened antigens from multiple immunizations.

Offit is the director of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and head of its Division of Infectious Diseases. He is also, if you believe the Internet, a "Devil's servant" known as "Dr. Proffit." He earned this distinction by co-inventing a vaccine that made him several million dollars. The idea that the success of his vaccine, which took twenty-five years to develop, should invalidate his expertise in immunology is somewhat baffling to Offit. But he understands the other source of his infamy. In response to the question of how many vaccines is too many, Offit determined that a child could theoretically handle a total of 100,000 vaccines or up to 10,000 vaccinations at once. He came to regret this number, though he does not believe it to be inaccurate. "The 100,000 number makes me sound like a madman," he told *Wired*. "Because that's the image:

100,000 shots sticking out of you. It's an awful image."

In a 2009 article for *Mothering* magazine, Jennifer Margulis expresses outrage that newborn infants are routinely vaccinated for hep B and wonders why she was encouraged to vaccinate her daughter "against a sexually transmitted disease she had no chance of catching." Hep B is transmitted through bodily fluids, so the most common way that newborns contract hep B is from their mothers. Babies born to women who are infected with hep B—and mothers can carry the virus without knowing it—will very likely be infected if they are not vaccinated within twelve hours of birth. Like human papillomavirus and a number of other viruses, hep B is a carcinogen. Newborns infected with it are at a high risk of developing long-term problems like liver cancer, but people of all ages can carry the disease without symptoms. Before the vaccine for hep B was introduced, the disease infected 200,000 people a year, and about a million Americans were chronically infected.

One of the mysteries of hep B immunization is that vaccinating

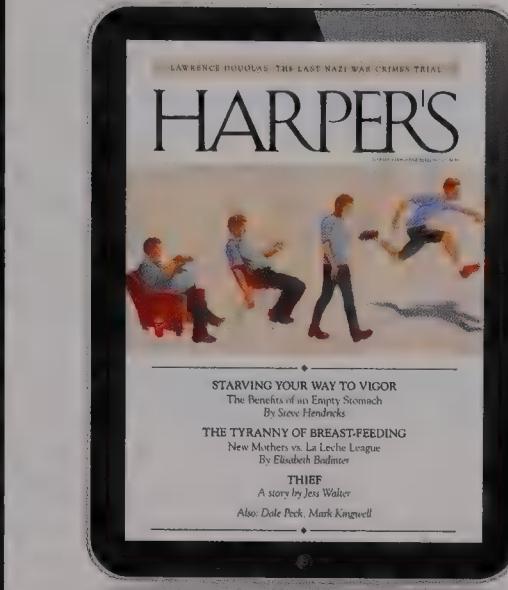
only "high-risk" groups, which was the original public-health strategy, did not bring down rates of infection. When the vaccine was introduced in 1981, it was recommended for prisoners, health-care workers, gay men, and IV-drug users. But rates of hep B infection remained unchanged until 1991, when the vaccine was recommended for all newborns. Only mass vaccination brought down the rates of infection, and since 1991 vaccination has virtually eliminated the disease in children.

Risk, in the case of hep B, turns out to be a rather complicated assessment. There is risk in having sex with just one partner, getting a tattoo, or traveling to Asia. In many cases, the source of infection is never known. I decided before my son's birth that I did not want him vaccinated for hep B, but it did not occur to me until months later that although I did not belong to any risk groups at the moment he was born, by the time I put him to my breast I had received a blood transfusion and my status had changed.

"Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick," Susan Sontag wrote in her introduction to *Illness as Metaphor*. "Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place." Sontag wrote these words while being treated for cancer. She wrote, as she later explained, to "calm the imagination." Those of us who have lived most of our lives in the kingdom of the well may find our imaginations already placid. Not all of us think of health as a transient state from which we may be exiled without warning. Some prefer to assume health as an identity. *I am healthy*, we say, meaning that we eat certain foods and avoid others, that we exercise and do not smoke. Health, it is implied, is the reward for living the way we live, and lifestyle is its own variety of immunity.

An 1881 handbill entitled *The Vaccination Vampire* warns of the

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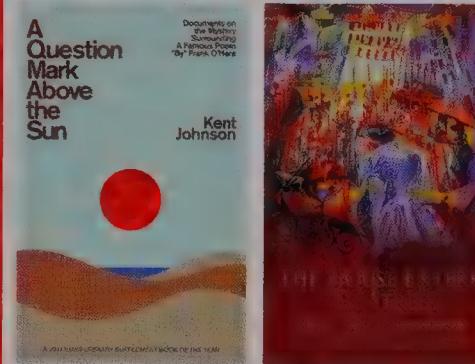
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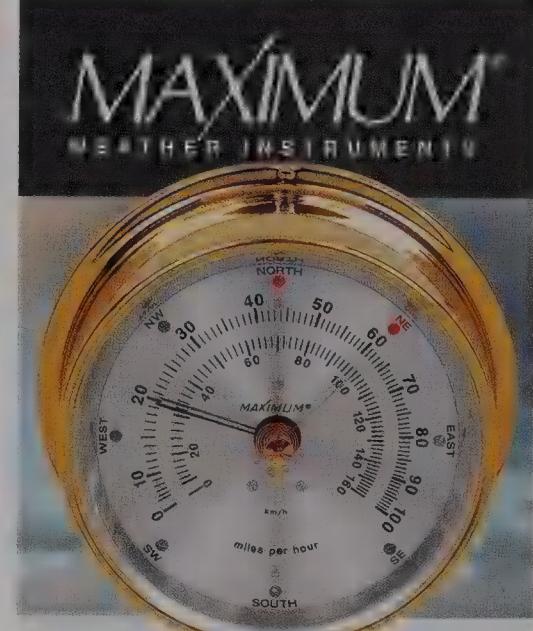
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“universal pollution” delivered by the vaccinator to the “pure babe.” The macabre sexuality of the vampire dramatized the fear that there was something sexual in the act of vaccination, an anxiety that was only reinforced when sexually transmitted diseases were spread through arm-to-arm vaccination. Until the advent of the hollow needle, vaccination often left a wound that would scar—“the mark of the beast,” some feared. In one 1882 sermon, vaccination was akin to an injection of sin, an “abominable mixture of corruption, the lees of human vice, and dregs of venial appetites, that in after life may foam upon the spirit, and develop hell within, and overwhelm the soul.”

While vaccination now rarely leaves a mark, our fears that we will be permanently marked have remained. We fear that vaccination will invite autism or any one of the diseases of immune dysfunction now plaguing industrialized countries—diabetes, asthma, allergies. We fear that the hep B vaccine will cause multiple sclerosis, or that the diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus vaccine will cause sudden infant death syndrome. We fear that the formaldehyde in some vaccines will cause cancer, or that the aluminum in others will damage our brains.

It was the “poison of adders, the blood, entrails and excretions of rats, bats, toads and sucking whelps,” that were imagined into the vaccines of the nineteenth century. This was the kind of organic matter, the filth, believed to be responsible for most disease at that time. Vaccination was dangerous then. Not because it would cause a child to grow the horns of a cow, but because it could spread diseases like syphilis when pus from one person was used to vaccinate another. Even when vaccination no longer involved an exchange of bodily fluids, bacterial infection remained a problem. In 1901, a contaminated batch of smallpox vaccine caused a tetanus outbreak that killed nine children in Camden, New Jersey. And in 1916, a typhoid vaccine carrying staph bac-

teria killed four children in Columbia, South Carolina.

Now our vaccines are, if all is well, sterile. Some contain preservatives to prevent the growth of bacteria. So now it is, in the antivaccine activist Jenny McCarthy’s words, “the frickin’ mercury, the ether, the aluminum, the antifreeze” that we fear in our vaccines. These substances are mostly, like the pollutants that threaten our environment today, inorganic. They are not of the body, or so we think. Although there is no ether or antifreeze in any vaccines, many do contain traces of the formaldehyde used to inactivate viruses. This can be alarming to those of us who associate formaldehyde with dead frogs in glass jars, but the chemical is produced by our bodies and is essential to our metabolism. The amount of formaldehyde already circulating in our systems is considerably greater than the amount we might receive through vaccination.

As for mercury, the ethylmercury preservative used in many vaccines until the late 1990s, thimerosal, is now only in some flu vaccines. Ethylmercury is cleared more easily by the body than the methylmercury often found in breast milk, and a child will almost certainly get more mercury exposure from her immediate environment than from vaccination. This is true too of aluminum, an adjuvant used in some vaccines to intensify the immune response. Aluminum is in a lot of things, including fruits and cereals as well as, again, breast milk. Our breast milk, it turns out, is as polluted as our environment. It contains paint thinners, dry-cleaning fluids, flame retardants, pesticides, and rocket fuel. “Most of these chemicals are found in microscopic amounts,” the journalist Florence Williams notes, “but if human milk were sold at the local Piggly Wiggly, some stock would exceed federal food-safety

levels for DDT residues and PCBs.”

When my son was six months old, at the peak of the H1N1 flu pandemic, another mother told me that she did not believe in herd immunity. It had not yet occurred to me

then that herd immunity was subject to belief, though there is clearly something of the occult in the idea of an invisible cloak of protection cast over an entire population. Herd immunity, an observable phenomenon, is implausible only if we think of our bodies as inherently disconnected from other bodies. Which, of course, we do.

One of the unfortunate features of the term “herd immunity” is that it invites association with the term “herd mentality,” a stampede toward stupidity. The herd, we assume, is foolish. Those of us who eschew the herd mentality tend to prefer a frontier mentality in which we imagine our bodies as isolated homesteads. The health of the homestead next to ours does not affect us, this thinking suggests, so long as ours is well tended.

If we were to recast the herd as a hive, perhaps the concept of shared immunity might be more appealing. Honeybees are industrious environmental do-gooders who also happen to be hopelessly interdependent. The health of any individual bee, as we know from the recent epidemic of colony collapse disorder, depends on the health of the hive.

The idea that our lives are dependent on our hive might not be very heartening. There are many well-documented instances of crowds making bad decisions—lynching is the first example that comes to mind for me. But the journalist James Surowiecki argues in *The Wisdom of Crowds* that large groups routinely solve complex problems whose solutions evade individuals. Groups of people, if they are sufficiently diverse and free to disagree, can provide us with thinking superior to that of any one expert. Groups can locate lost submarines, predict terrorist attacks, and reveal the cause of a new disease. Science, Surowiecki reminds us, is “a profoundly collective enterprise.” It’s a product of the herd.

But “herd immunity” suggests we are only so many cattle, waiting, perhaps, to be sent to slaughter. We may feel, when herded toward vaccination, that we are assuming the dumb submission of animals who look on

passively as they are daily robbed of their babies' milk. It is no wonder some mothers resist a metaphoric milking.

The Circassian women," wrote Voltaire, "have, from time immemorial, communicated the smallpox to their children when not above six months old by making an incision in the arm, and by putting into this incision a pustule, taken carefully from the body of another child." It was women who inoculated their children, and Voltaire mourned the fact that the "lady of some French ambassador" had not brought the technique from Constantinople to Paris. "What prompted the Circassians to introduce this custom, which seems so strange to others," Voltaire wrote, "is a motive common to all: maternal love and self-interest."

Medical care was still mainly the domain of women then, though the tradition of the female healer was already threatened. Midwives and wise women, guilty of crimes that included providing contraception and easing the pains of labor, were persecuted in the witch hunts that spread across Europe from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. While women were being killed for their suspicious ability to heal the sick, physicians in European universities studied Plato and Aristotle but learned very little about the body. They did not experiment, did not practice science as we know it, and had little empirical data to support their treatments, which were often superstitious in nature. Women healers were also susceptible to superstition, but as far back as the early Middle Ages midwives were using ergot to speed contractions and belladonna to prevent miscarriage. St. Hildegard of Bingen catalogued the healing properties of 213 medicinal plants, and female lay healers were using recipes for painkillers and anti-inflammatories at a time when physicians were still writing scripture on the jaws of their patients to heal toothaches.

Benjamin Rush, one of the fathers of American medicine, bled his patients to, as the writers Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English put it, "Transylvanian excesses." In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-

turies, patients were bled until they fainted, dosed with mercury, and blistered with mustard plasters. While women were excluded from formal medical education, male physicians competed, sometimes aggressively, with their informal practice in the home. But the art of healing, as doctors were to discover, is rather difficult to commodify. It was the pressures of the marketplace, Ehrenreich and English suggest in *For Her Own Good*, that led to the practice of "heroic" medicine, which relied heavily on dangerous therapies like bleeding. The purpose of heroic medicine was not so much to heal the patient as to produce some measurable—and, ideally, dramatic—effect for which the patient could be billed. Rush, for one, was accused at the time of killing more patients than he cured.

As doctors began to replace midwives in the nineteenth century, childbirth moved into hospitals, and the maternal death rate rose. We now know that childbed fever, as puerperal sepsis was called, was spread by doctors who did not wash their hands between exams. But it was blamed on tight petticoats, fretting, and bad morals. In the twentieth century, poorly understood illnesses like schizophrenia would be blamed on bad mothers, as would marginalized behaviors such as homosexuality. Autism, according to a prevailing theory in the 1950s, was caused by insensitive "refrigerator mothers."

Even a moderately informed woman squinting at the rough outlines of a terribly compressed history of medicine can discern that quite a bit of what has passed for science in the past two hundred years, particularly where women are concerned, has not been the result of scientific inquiry so much as it has been the refuse of science repurposed to support existing ideologies. In this tradition, Andrew Wakefield's now retracted 1998 *Lancet* study of twelve children with both developmental disorders and intestinal problems advanced a hypothesis that was already in the air—the children were referred to Wakefield by antivaccine activists, and the study was funded by a lawyer preparing a lawsuit built around many of the same children. Wakefield speculated, on the basis of evidence later revealed

Turning Toward Home

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAMILY FROM HARPER'S MAGAZINE

Some of our most loving—and most difficult—relationships are with our parents, children, siblings, and extended families. These complicated relationships are the foundation of our society and our lives: they define our past, give us hope for the future, teach us to get along with others, and, often, provide excellent examples of how not to behave. The moving essays in *Turning Toward Home*, all of which were originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, gracefully explore these dynamics. Authors include David Mamet, Donna Tartt, Richard Ford, Sallie Tisdale, Louise Erdrich, and many more. Introduction by Verlyn Klinkenborg.

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to be falsified, that the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine might be linked to a behavioral syndrome. While the publicity around Wakefield's paper precipitated a dramatic drop in vaccination against measles, the paper itself concluded, "We did not prove an association between measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine and the syndrome described," and the primary finding of the study was that more research was needed. Those who went on to use Wakefield's inconclusive work to support the notion that vaccines cause autism are guilty not of ignorance or science denial but of using weak science as it has always been used—to lend credibility to an idea that we want to believe for other reasons.

Believing that vaccination causes devastating diseases allows us to tell ourselves a story we already know—what heals may harm, and the sum of science is not always progress. "Women know very well that knowledge from the natural sciences has been used in the interests of our domination and not our liberation," the science historian Donna Haraway writes. And this understanding, she observes, can render us less vulnerable to the seductive claims of absolute truth that are sometimes made in the name of science. But it can also invite us to undervalue the place and importance of scientific knowledge. We need science, Haraway warns. And where it is not built on social domination, science can be liberating.

It is difficult to read any historical account of smallpox without encountering the word "filth." In the nineteenth century, smallpox was widely considered a disease of "filth," which meant that it was understood to be a disease of the poor. According to filth theory, any number of contagious diseases were caused by bad air that had been made foul by excrement or rot. The sanitary conditions of the urban poor threatened the middle classes, who shuttered their windows against the air blowing off the slums at night. Filth, it was thought, was responsible not just for disease but also for immorality.

Filth theory would eventually be replaced by germ theory as an under-

standing of the nature of contagion, but it wasn't entirely wrong or useless. Raw sewage running in the streets can certainly spread diseases—though smallpox isn't one of them—and the sanitation efforts inspired by filth theory greatly improved public health. The reversal of the Chicago River, for instance, so that sewage was not delivered directly to Lake Michigan, the city's drinking-water supply, had some obvious benefits for the citizens of Chicago.

Now, the mothers I meet on the beaches of Lake Michigan do not worry much over filth. Some of us are familiar with the hygiene hypothesis, the notion that a child's immune system needs to encounter germs to develop properly, and most of us believe that dirt is good for our kids. But the idea that toxins, rather than filth or germs, are the root cause of most maladies is a popular theory of disease among people like me. The toxins that distress us range from pesticide residue to high-fructose corn syrup. Particularly suspect substances include the bisphenol A lining our tin cans, the phthalates in our shampoos, and the chlorinated Tris in our couches and pillows.

The definition of "toxin" can be somewhat surprising if you have grown accustomed to hearing it in the context of flame retardants and parabens. Though "toxin" is now often used to refer to manmade chemicals, the more precise meaning of the term is reserved for biologically produced poisons. The pertussis toxin, for example, is responsible for damage to the lungs that can cause whooping cough to linger for months after the bacteria that produced it have been killed by antibiotics. The diphtheria toxin is potent enough to cause massive organ failure, and tetanus bacteria produce a deadly neurotoxin. All of which we now protect against with vaccination.

Though "toxoid" is the term for a toxin that has been rendered no longer toxic, the existence of a class of vaccines called toxoids probably does not help quell widespread concerns that vaccination is a source of toxicity. The consumer advocate Barbara Loe Fisher routinely stokes these fears, referring to vaccines as "biological agents of unknown toxicity" and calling for the development of "nontoxic" preservatives

and for more studies on the "toxicity of all other vaccine additives" and their potential "cumulative toxic effects."

In this context, fear of toxicity strikes me as an old anxiety with a new name. Where the word "filth" once suggested, with its moralistic air, the evils of the flesh, the word "toxic" now condemns the chemical evils of our industrial world. This is not to say that concerns over environmental pollution are unjustified—like filth theory, toxicity theory is anchored in legitimate dangers.

The way we now think about toxicity bears some resemblance to the way we once thought about filth. Both theories imagine urban environments as inherently unhealthy. And both allow their subscribers to maintain a sense of control over their own health by pursuing personal purity. For the filth theorist, this meant a retreat into the home, where heavy curtains and shutters might seal out the smell of the poor and their problems. Our version of this shuttering is now achieved through the purchase of purified water, air purifiers, and food marketed with the promise of purity.

Purity is the seemingly innocent concept behind a number of the most sinister social actions of the past century. A passion for bodily purity drove the eugenics movement and led to the sterilization of women and men who were deaf, blind, disabled, or just poor. Concerns for bodily purity were behind miscegenation laws that persisted more than a century after the abolition of slavery, and behind the sodomy laws that were only recently declared unconstitutional. Quite a bit of human solidarity, it seems, has been sacrificed to preserve some kind of imagined purity.

If we do not yet know exactly what the presence of a vast range of chemicals in umbilical-cord blood and breast milk might mean for the future of our children's health, we do at least know that we are no cleaner, even at birth, than our environment at large. We have more microorganisms in our guts than we have cells in our bodies—we are crawling with bacteria and we are full of chemicals. We are, in other words, continuous with everything here on earth. Including—and especially—each other. ■

SLIVER OF SKY

Confronting the trauma of sexual abuse
By Barry Lopez

One day in the fall of 1938, a man named Harry Shier entered the operating room of a Toronto hospital and began an appendectomy procedure on a prepubescent boy. He was not a trained surgeon; he nearly botched the operation, and the boy's parents reacted angrily. Suspicions about Shier's medical credentials had already surfaced among operating-room nurses, and the hospital, aware of other complaints related to Shier's groin-area operations on young boys, opened a formal investigation. By the time the hospital board determined that both his medical degree, from a European university, and his European letters of reference were fraudulent, Harry Shier had departed for the United States.

A few years later, a police officer in Denver caught Shier raping a boy in the front seat of his automobile. Shier spent a year in prison and then slipped out of Colorado. In the late 1940s, he surfaced

Barry Lopez is the author of thirteen works of fiction and non-fiction, including *Arctic Dreams*, which won the 1986 National Book Award for Nonfiction.



in North Hollywood, California, as the director of a sanitarium where he supervised the treatment of people with addictions, primarily alcoholics. In the summer of 1952, at the age of seven, I was introduced to him when I visited the sanitarium with my mother.

At the time, I lived with her and my younger brother in nearby Reseda, a town in the San Fernando Valley. My parents had recently divorced, and my father had moved across the country to Florida. To support the three of us, my mother had taken a day job teach-

ing home economics at a junior high school in the city of San Fernando and also a job teaching dressmaking two evenings a week at Pierce Junior College in Woodland Hills, on the far western edge of the Valley.

Early that summer, my mother had somewhat reluctantly agreed to take in a houseguest, her first cousin Evelyn Carrothers. Evelyn, who was my mother's age, lived an hour away in Long Beach and was struggling with a drinking problem. Her marriage was also in trouble. Mother couldn't accommodate Evelyn for long in our one-bedroom house, so she began inquiring among her friends about other arrangements. People advised her to call Alcoholics Anonymous. Someone in the organization's Los Angeles office suggested that she contact the North Hollywood Lodge and Sanitarium.

One morning, Mother drove us all to the facility at 12003 Riverside Drive, known then around the Valley, I would later learn, as "Shier's dryer." In those years, Shier was renowned as someone who could "cure" alcoholism. He was also able to relate sympathetically to

the families of alcoholics. When we arrived at the clinic, Mother introduced my four-year-old brother and me to "Dr." Shier. We shook hands with him, and he escorted the two of us to the sanitarium's kitchen, where we each selected a fresh doughnut from an array laid out on trays for the patients—frosted, sugared, glazed, covered with sprinkles. A nice man. I remember the building's corridors reeked that morning of something other than disinfectant. Paraldehyde, I was later informed, which Shier used liberally to sedate his patients.

Shortly after Evelyn had, in Shier's estimation, recovered enough to return to Long Beach—she would begin drinking again and, a year later, would return to his facility—he started dropping by our home in Reseda. He had gotten to know something of Mother's marital and financial situation from Evelyn, and during one of his early visits he told Mother that he was concerned: her income was not, in his view, commensurate with her capabilities. He said he might be able to do something about that. (Mother's divorce settlement required my father to send her ten dollars a month in child support—an obligation he rarely met, according to correspondence I would later find.) Shier said that one of his former patients was in a position to speak with the school board about Mother's value to the school system. This appeal was apparently made, and a short while later she received a small increase in salary.

She was grateful. Harry was pleased to help. Shier conducted himself around Mother like someone considering serious courtship. She was a handsome woman of thirty-nine, he a short, abrasively self-confident, balding man of fifty-six. He complimented her on the way she was single-handedly raising her two polite, neatly dressed sons. He complimented her on her figure. Occasionally he'd take her hand or caress her lightly on the shoulder. After a while, Shier began dropping by the house in the evening, just as my brother and I were getting into our pajamas. He'd bring a tub of ice cream along, and the four of us would have dessert together. One evening he arrived without the ice cream. He'd for-

gotten. He suggested I accompany him to the grocery store, where I could pick out a different dessert for each of us.

A few minutes after we left the house, he pulled his car up alongside a tall hedge on an unlit residential street off Lindley Avenue. He turned me to the side, put me facedown on the seat, pulled down my pajama bottoms, and pushed his erect penis into my anus. As he built toward his climax he told me, calmly but emphatically, that he was a doctor, that I needed treatment, and that we were not going to be adding to

Mother's worries by telling her about my problem.

Shier followed this pattern of sexual assault with me for almost four years. He came by the house several times a month and continued to successfully direct Mother's attention away from what he was doing. It is hard to imagine, now, that no one suspected what was going on. It is equally difficult, even for therapists, to explain how this type of sexual violence can be perpetuated between two human beings for years without the victim successfully objecting. Why, people wonder, does the evidence for a child's resistance in these circumstances usually seem so meager? I believe it's because the child is too innocent to plan effectively, and because, from the very start, the child faces a labyrinth of confused allegiances. I asked myself questions I couldn't answer: Do I actually need protection in this situation? From what, precisely? I was bewildered by what was happening. How could I explain to my mother what I was doing? Physical resistance, of course, is virtually impossible for most children. The child's alternatives, as I understand them, never get much beyond endurance and avoidance—and speculation about how to encourage intervention.

An additional source of confusion for me was the belief that I had been chosen as a special patient by Harry Shier, an esteemed doctor and the director of a prestigious institution. A weird sense of privilege was attached to Shier's interest in me, and to the existence of an unspecified medical condition too serious or exotic to share with Mother. Also, being the elder son in a lower-middle-class and fatherless family, I came to feel—or he encouraged

me to feel—that I was shouldering an important responsibility for my family.

I understood that I was helping my family, and he complimented me on my maturity.

When Shier came to our house he would inform Mother that we were just going out to get some ice cream together, or, on a Saturday afternoon, that he was going to take me to an early movie, and then maybe out to dinner at the Sportsmen's Lodge on Ventura Boulevard in Studio City. We would say goodbye and he would walk me to his car and we would drive off. If it was dark, he'd pull over soon in a secluded spot and rape me in the front seat; or we'd go to the movie and he'd force my head into his lap for a while, pushing at me through his trousers; or it would be dinner at the restaurant, where we'd hook our trout in a small pool for the chef to cook, and then he'd drive on to the sanitarium, where he'd park behind the single-story building. He'd direct me up an outside staircase to a series of rotting duckboards that led across the clinic's flat roof to a locked door, the outside entrance to a rooftop apartment, where I was to wait. He'd enter the front of the building, check on his patients, say good night to the nurses, and ascend an inside staircase to reach the interior door of his studio-size quarters. I'd see the lights go on inside. A moment later he'd open the door to the roof and pull me in.

One night in these chambers, after he was through with me, he took a medical text from a bookshelf. He sat me down beside him on the edge of the bed and showed me black-and-white photographs of men's genitals ravaged by syphilis. This, he said, was what came from physical intimacy with women.

In bed with him, I would try to maneuver myself so I could focus on the horizontal sliver of sky visible between the lower edge of the drawn blinds and the white sill of the partially open window. Passing clouds, a bird, the stars.

From time to time, often on the drive back to my home, Shier would remind me that if I were ever to tell anyone, if the treatments were to stop, he would have no choice but to have me committed to an institution. And then, if I were no longer around for my family ... I'd seen how he occasionally slipped Mother a few folded bills in my presence. It

would be best, I thought, if I just continued to be the brave boy he said I was.

I know the questions I initially asked myself afterward about these events were not very sophisticated. For example: Why hadn't Shier also molested my younger brother? My brother, I conjectured, had been too young in 1952, only four years old; later, with one brother firmly in hand, Shier had probably considered pursuing the other too much of a risk. (When we were older, my brother told me that Shier had molested him, several times, in the mid-1950s. I went numb with grief. After the four years of sexual violence with Shier were over, what sense of self-worth I still retained rested mainly with a conviction that, however I might have debased myself with Shier, I had at least protected my brother—and also probably saved my family from significant financial hardship. Further shame would come after I discovered that our family had never been in serious financial danger, that Mother's earnings had covered our every necessity, and more.)

My mother remarried in 1956. We moved to New York City, where my stepfather lived, and I never again saw the malachite-green-and-cream-colored Pontiac Chieftain pulling up in front of our house on Calvert Street. After we moved into my stepfather's apartment, I felt a great sense of freedom. I was so very far away now from Harry Shier. A new school, a new neighborhood, new friends. I had surfaced in another ocean. This discovery of fresh opportunity, however, which sometimes gave way to palpable euphoria, I nevertheless experienced as unreliable. I couldn't keep a hold on it. And then, two years after we moved East, when I was thirteen, Harry Shier flew into New York and my sense of safety collapsed. He arrived with my stepfather at our vacation home on the Jersey Shore one summer evening in 1958. He was my parents' guest for the weekend. A surprise for the boys.

Weren't we pleased?

The next morning, a Saturday, while my parents were preparing breakfast in the kitchen, Shier eased open the door of my attic bedroom and closed it quietly behind him. He walked wordlessly to the edge of my bed, his lips twitching in a characteristic pucker, his eyes fixed

on mine. When he reached under the sheet I kicked at him and sprang from the bed, grabbing a baseball bat that was leaning against the headboard. Naked, cursing, swinging at him with the bat, I drove him from the room and slammed the door.

While I dressed, he began a conversation downstairs with my parents.

Eavesdropping on them from the hallway next to the kitchen door, I heard Shier explain that I needed to be committed. He described—in grave tones, which gave his voice a kind of Delphic weight—how I was prone to delusions, a dangerous, potentially violent boy. Trouble ahead. Through the hinge gap in the doorway, I studied my mother and stepfather seated with him at the breakfast table. Their hands were folded squarely on the oilcloth. They took in Shier's measured, professional characterization with consternation and grief. In that moment, I couldn't bring myself to describe for them what he had done. The thought of the change it would bring to our lives was overwhelming; and, regardless, my own situation felt far too precarious. Having abruptly gained the security of a family with a devoted father, I could now abruptly lose it.

I left the house without delay, to play pickup baseball with my friends. In the afternoon I rode off alone on my bicycle to the next town inland. When I returned that evening, I learned that Shier had asked my stepfather to drive him straight back to New York that morning so that he could catch a plane west from Idlewild. I had insulted the doctor, my mother told me, and embarrassed the family. She presented his analysis of my behavior. When I tried to object, her response was, "But he's a doctor!"

Shier, she said, would confer with her and my stepfather in a few days by telephone, about accommodations for me in Los Angeles.

I was not, finally, sent to California, though the reason for this was never discussed with me. If my parents harbored any misgivings about Shier, I didn't hear them. I studied hard, came home on time, did my chores: I continued to behave as a dutiful son, a boy

neither parent would willingly give up.

The trauma stayed with me, however, and in the spring of 1962, when I

was seventeen, I gave in to a state of depression. I had become confused about my sexual identity and was haunted by a sense of contamination, a feeling that I had been rendered worthless as a man because of what I had done.

When I was immobilized in the elaborate web of Shier's appetites and undone by his ploys to ensure his own safety, I had assumed I was the only boy he was involved with. It was the sudden realization that there might have been—probably were—others, and that he might still be raping boys in California, that compelled me to break my silence and risk, I believed, disastrous humiliation. I phoned my stepfather at his office. He agreed to meet me in the lobby of the New York Athletic Club on Central Park South, where I thought he would feel comfortable.

He strode impatiently into his club that afternoon and took a seat opposite me in one of the lobby's large leather chairs. He was a busy man, but he was prepared to listen. I gave him a brief account of Shier's behavior and of my history with him, and I made two requests of him. First, that he never tell anyone what had happened; if he ever came to believe that Mother had to know, he was to let me tell her. Second, that he help me stop Shier. He listened with rising interest and increasing ire. He was especially angry, I later realized, at the idea that he had been duped by Shier that summer in New Jersey.

Early the next morning, he took a plane to Los Angeles, and late that same afternoon he met with two LAPD detectives. When he returned to New York three days later, my stepfather told me that the detectives he'd spoken with were going to scrutinize everything—the North Hollywood Lodge and Sanitarium, Shier's criminal record, his network of acquaintances. They were going to gather all the evidence. I only needed to be patient. The detectives would contact us.

That week gave way to another. My stepfather waved off my anxious inquiries. He was in touch with the detectives, he said. They were working on it. When I finally confronted him, he admitted that, in consultation with the detectives, he had decided it would be too great an undertaking for me to go up against such a clever deviant, to endure cross-examination in a trial. So

he was choosing not to press charges. Besides, he said, Shier had bolted as soon as he had suspected an investigation was under way.

A week or so later, my stepfather told me that he had just heard from the LAPD detectives that Harry Shier had been killed—an automobile accident in Arizona. This was, I now believe, my stepfather's preemptive effort to force closure.

In 2003, forty-one years after these conversations with my stepfather and some years into my own effort to comprehend the psychological effects of what had happened to me, I phoned the LAPD. An officer there, an intermediary, was able to locate one of the two long-retired detectives who had begun the investigation of Shier in 1962. The detective did not want to speak with me directly, but he authorized the intermediary to pass on his recollections. (Because this information is at best thirdhand, I cannot be certain about either the dates or the circumstances surrounding Shier's early criminal history. The police department's official records of the case, including the detectives' notes from their conversations with my stepfather, were destroyed, along with other inactive records from that time.) The officer informed me about the botched operations at the hospital in Toronto and the sodomy charge in Colorado, gave me the approximate dates, and confirmed that the investigation had ended soon after it began because Shier had fled the state. The detective also recalled that Shier might have been killed shortly after he left California, possibly in South America, but he could not remember precisely.

In 1989, years before this conversation with the LAPD officer took place, I interviewed Evelyn Carrothers at her home in Studio City about her experiences with Shier. She said that "behind a façade of solicitous concern," Shier was a "mean man." A bully. She had never liked him, she said, but he had been very successful treating alcoholics in the Los Angeles area in the 1950s, and she herself had referred many people to him over the years. At the time I spoke with her, Evelyn had not only been sober a long while but had become a prominent member of Alcoholics Anonymous in

southern California. She was upset, I thought, by my revelation that Shier was a pedophile, but she wouldn't give me the names of anyone who might have known him. She said she never knew what became of him, but she was sure he was dead. She even argued a case for Shier: Whatever wrong he might have done in his private life, he had been of great value to the larger community.

I've never been able to comprehend Evelyn's sense of the larger good, though her point of view is a position people commonly take when confronted with evidence of sexual crimes committed by people they respect. (A reputation for valued service and magnanimous gestures often forms part of the protective cover pedophiles create.)

A more obvious question I asked myself as I grew older was: How could my mother not have known? Perhaps she did, although she died, a few years after she was told, unwilling to discuss her feelings about what had gone on in California. I've made some measure of peace with her stance. When certain individuals feel severely threatened—emotionally, financially, physically—the lights on the horizon they use to orient themselves in the world might easily wink out. Life can then become a series of fear-driven decisions and compulsive acts of self-protection. People start to separate what is deeply troubling in their lives from what they see as good. To use the usual metaphor, they isolate the events from one another by storing them in different rooms in a large hotel. While these rooms share a corridor, they do not communicate directly with one another.

I'm not able, today, to put the image I have of my mother as her children's attentive guardian together with the idea of her as an innocent, a person blinded by the blandishments of a persistent pedophile. But for whatever reason, she was not able, back then, to consider what might be happening in the hours after she saw Shier drive away, her son's head, from her point of view on the porch, not quite clearing the sill of the car window as the two of them departed.

In June 1970, my stepfather related to my mother, without my knowledge, a distorted and incomplete version of what her friend Harry Shier had done, breaking the promise he had made to

me that day eight years before when I'd spoken to him. They were having lunch together in Midtown Manhattan; she became hysterical and was taken from the restaurant by ambulance to a hospital. When she called me that evening, all she could bring herself to say, in a voice resigned and defeated, was, "I know what happened. I know what happened to you."

And then she never spoke of it again.

Six years later, in July 1976, as my mother was dying of lung cancer. I asked her whether she wanted to speak to me about California. She lay on her bed in a private room at Manhattan's Lenox Hill Hospital, rocking her head slowly back and forth like a metronome. Her face averted, she wept silently while I sat mute in a chair by the bed. She would not take my hand.

Some of the pathways of a debilitating sexual history are simply destined never to be mapped.

The reasons monstrously abusive relationships persist between people are as complex, I think, as the mathematics of turbulence. The explanation I gave myself for decades, partly to avoid having to address any question of my own complicity, was that I had done this in order to keep our family safe and intact. After my father abandoned us, my mother told me that I would now be the man of the house. I took her remark literally. I began to double-check the locks on the doors at night. I mowed and weeded the lawn and took the trash out to the incinerator in the back yard to burn. I got the day's mail from the box on the street. Whenever Shier showed up at the door, I would bear down on myself: Just see the business with Shier through, I said to myself. Maybe another man, one of the more likable men Mother dated, would come and stay with us. And this one wouldn't walk out. Standing in the shower in Shier's filthy apartment, washing the blood and semen off my legs, I hammered this thought into my mind: You cannot quit.

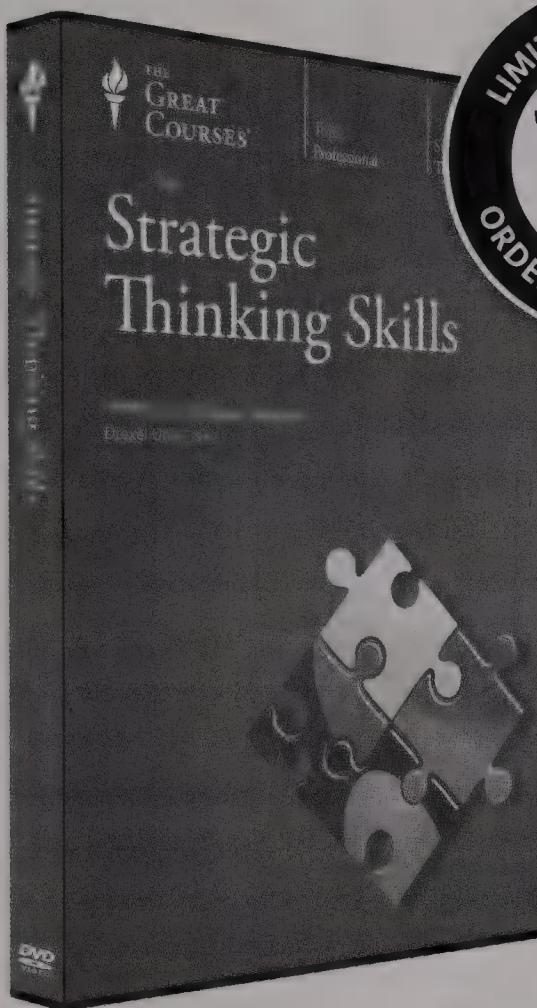
I bottled the anger. I hid the blood.

I adamantly focused anywhere else.

What my stepfather actually did when he went to California in 1962, and



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how he presented Shier's crimes to the detectives, I will never know. And though I know he saw Evelyn at that time, I don't know what he discussed with her. Over the years, right up to his death, whenever I asked him about what he'd done, he became evasive. In an effort to seem sincere, he would occasionally recall a forgotten detail from one of his conversations with the detectives. This additional fact would sometimes shift my basic understanding of the longer story he had already told, raising new questions. Or, alternatively, trying to demonstrate compassion, he might suddenly recall a fact meant to soothe me but that made no sense. He told me once, for example, that during his 1962 visit Evelyn had taken him to see Shier's grave at the Forest Lawn Memorial-Park in Glendale—several weeks before Shier was supposedly killed in an out-of-state automobile accident.

My stepfather, a recovering alcoholic, became, like Evelyn, a regionally prominent figure in Alcoholics Anonymous in the late 1960s. Whenever I inquired, in those early weeks of the investigation, about what sort of progress the detectives were making, he would find a way to mention how many alcoholics Shier had helped. Alcoholism, he said, was a "terrible disease," a more pervasive and serious issue, he wanted me to understand, than pedophilia. He suggested I would benefit from a slightly different perspective on all this. Shier, he conceded, was an awful man—but he had done a lot of good. I should consider, instead, how well I was doing. At seventeen I was student-body president at my Jesuit prep school. I had the highest academic average in my class senior year; I was lettering in two sports; I was escorting debutantes to balls at the Plaza, the Sherry-Netherland, the Pierre. Whatever might have occurred in California, he said, things had actually worked out all right. I should let it go.

For thirty years this was exactly the path I chose. Silence. I believed that in spite of Shier's brutalizations I could develop a stable, productive life, that I could simply walk away from everything that had happened.

The conclusion I eventually reached about my stepfather's refusal to pursue

charges against Shier was that he did not want the family to be embarrassed by a trial. He was unable to understand that the decision to face cross-examination in a courtroom was not his to make. He could not appreciate that the opportunity to stand up in a public forum and describe, with Shier present, what he had done, and what he had forced me to do, was as important to me as any form of legal justice. Not to be allowed to speak or, worse, to have someone else relate my story and write its ending was to extend the original, infuriating experience of helplessness, to underscore the humiliation of being powerless. My stepfather's ultimate dismissal of my request for help was an instance, chilling for me, of an observation that victims of child molestation often make: If you tell them, they won't believe you. Believing you entails too much disruption.

From what I have read over the years in newspapers and magazines about scandals involving serial pedophiles, I have gathered that people seem to think that what victims most desire in the way of retribution is money and justice, apparently in that order. My own guess would be that what they most want is something quite different: they want to be believed, to have a foundation on which they can rebuild a sense of dignity. Reclaiming self-respect is more important than winning money, more important than exacting vengeance.

Victims do not want someone else's public wrath, the umbrage of an attorney or an editorial writer or a politician, to stand in for the articulation of their own anger. When a pedophile is exposed by a grand-jury indictment today, the tenor of public indignation often seems ephemeral to me, a response generated by "civic" emotion. Considering the number of children who continue to be abused in America—something like one in seven boys and one in three girls—these expressions of condemnation seem naïve. Without a deeper commitment to vigilance, society's outrage begins to take on the look of another broken promise.

Up until the time I interviewed Evelyn in the late 1980s, I had grown to more or less accept my stepfather's views about what had happened in

California—which was, of course, my own form of denial. Whatever had been done to me, I held to the belief that things had actually turned out fairly well. By the time I was forty I had experienced some national success as a writer. I was friends with a large, if geographically scattered, group of people. And I was living happily in a rural, forested area in western Oregon with my wife of twenty years. Significantly, since I had moved to this mountainous place in 1970, the emotional attachment I felt to my home had become essential to any ongoing sense of well-being I had. My almost daily contact there with wild animals, the physical separation of the house from the homes of my neighbors, the flow of a large white-water river past the property, the undomesticated land unfolding for miles around, the rawness of the weather at the back door—all of it fed a feeling of security.

During the years of "traumatic sexual abuse," the term psychologists use for serial sexual abuse, the deepest and sometimes only relief I had was when I was confronted with the local, elementary forces of nature: hot Santa Ana winds blowing west into the San Fernando Valley from the Mojave Desert; Pacific storm surf crashing at Zuma and the other beaches west of Malibu; winter floods inundating our neighborhood when Caballero Creek breached its banks on its way to the Los Angeles River. I took from each of these encounters a sense of what it might feel like to become fully alive. When I gazed up beneath a flock of homing birds or listened as big winds swirled the dry leaves of eucalyptus trees or sat alone somewhere in a rarely traversed part of the Santa Monica Mountains, waiting for a glimpse of a coyote or a brush rabbit, I would feel exhilaration. Encouragement.

But deep inside, I knew things remained awry. (It is relatively easy today—it wasn't then—to find pertinent and explicit information about childhood sexual trauma. How one interprets that information or chooses to act on it remains a perilous second step.) I could not, for example, shake the old thought that by not having acted sooner I was somehow responsible for what happened to

other boys after I left California. According to my stepfather, one of the investigating detectives said I had been lucky to walk away in 1956. Continuing their investigation after Shier disappeared, my stepfather told me, the detectives had located three other boys, "none of whom had fared well." The detectives' advice to my stepfather had been that neither he nor I should inquire further into what Harry Shier had been doing with young boys during his years in North Hollywood.

When I began a deliberate inquiry into my past, starting in 1989, I thought of myself as a man walking around with shrapnel sealed in his flesh, and I wanted to get the fragments out. The doubts and images I had put aside for years were now starting to fester. I felt more or less continually seasick, confronting every day a harrowing absence within myself. I imagined it as a mine shaft of bleak, empty space, which neither the love of a spouse nor the companionship of friends nor professional success could efface. The thought began to work on me that a single, bold step, however, some sort of confrontation with the past, might sufficiently jar this frame of mind and change it. I could, I thought, dramatically cure myself in this way.

I phoned Forest Lawn Memorial-Park. No, there was no Harry Shier buried in any of their cemeteries. I couldn't find an obituary for him in any of the southern California papers either. I called Evelyn and asked whether I could come to California and interview her. I would begin my healing, my ablution, by speaking with someone who had known him well. And on that same trip, I decided, I'd drive the rental car to 12003 Riverside Drive in North Hollywood. If the sanitarium was still there, I'd walk through the front door.

Shier's rooftop apartment, nearly hidden behind the branches of several Norfolk Island pines, remained just visible from the sidewalk. I parked in the shade of a pepper tree on Ben Street and walked through the main entrance of the white stucco building, which now housed a private secondary school, a yeshiva. No

one took any notice of me standing in the foyer. If someone had come up to inquire about my business, I was prepared to say that I had been a patient in this place thirty years earlier, when it had been a hospital. But I seemed to be invisible.

I walked down the main corridor. In rooms to my right, where I'd once seen the bedridden lying in dim shadow, lights now blazed. Attentive students sat at desks, avidly scribbling while someone lectured. I arrived at an intersection and suddenly found myself staring at the foot of an interior staircase. The door to the stairs, slightly ajar, revealed steps winding upward to the left. My throat clenched like a fist in my neck.

I left the building as soon as I was able to turn around. I ran across Riverside Drive into an outdoor nursery with a fence around it. I went down a pea-gravel path, past potted camellias and oleanders, past blooming primroses and azaleas. After a few minutes, breathing easily once more, the rigidity gone out of my back muscles, I crossed back to where I'd parked the car and drove away.

Later that afternoon, at the Central Library on West Fifth Street in downtown Los Angeles, I gathered several San Fernando Valley phone books from the 1950s, trying to remember the names of my mother's friends, guessing at the spellings—Emery, Falotico, Ling, Murray—hoping to dislodge a memory, to find a thread to follow. When my right index finger came to Shier's name, it halted there below the stark typeface. My bowels burst into my trousers.

In the men's room, I threw my undershorts into a waste bin and washed my pants in the sink, trying to keep the wet spot small. I was in my stocking feet, putting my pants back on, when a guard entered abruptly and stood alert and suspicious in the doorway. He informed me that the library was closing. I'll be only another moment, I assured him.

A few minutes later, shielding the wet seat of my pants with my briefcase, I met a friend for dinner nearby. When the maître d' asked whether we preferred eating outdoors or in, I suggested we sit outside. I didn't tell my friend where I'd been that day.

Over the years, I'd spoken to very few people about Shier—my brother, serious girlfriends, my wife, a few close friends. I didn't feel any need to be heard, and the chance of being misunderstood, of being taken for no more than the innocent victim, long ago, of a criminal's heinous acts seemed great. Pity, I thought, would take things in the wrong direction for me. What I wanted to know now was:

What happened to me?

In the months following my visit to the building on Riverside, I placed an occasional call to state and county agencies in California, trying to track down some of the details that might have framed my story. Doing this, I came to suspect that I was missing the memory of certain events. I could recall many scenes from my childhood in the Valley, even remember some vividly; but I also became aware of gaps in that period of time from which nothing surfaced.

In the fall of 1996, I visited a therapist for the first time. I'd briefly seen a psychiatrist when I was in college, but we were not able to get anywhere. Years later, I understood it was because I hadn't been capable at the time of doing the required work. My expectation was that she would somehow simply fix me, get me over the anxiety, over the humiliation.

I chose therapy because my own efforts to clarify my past seemed dramatically unproductive, and because I was now, once again, of a mind that something was wrong with me. I had begun to recognize patterns in my behavior. If I sensed, for example, that I was being manipulated by someone, or disrespected, I quickly became furious out of all proportion. And I'd freeze sometimes when faced with a serious threat instead of calmly moving toward some sort of resolution. I suspected that these habits—no great insight—were rooted in my childhood experience.

Also, a persistent, anxiety-induced muscular tension across my shoulders had by now become so severe that I'd ruptured a cervical disc. When a regimen of steroids brought only limited relief, my doctor recommended surgery. After a second doctor said I had no option but surgery, I reluctantly

agreed—until the surgical procedure was drawn up for me on a piece of paper: I'd be placed facedown and unconscious on an operating table, and a one-inch vertical slit would be opened in the nape of my neck. I said no, absolutely not. I'd live with the pain.

From the beginning, the therapist encouraged me to move at my own pace through the memories I was able to retrieve, and to resist the urge to fit any of these events into a pattern. I remember him saying in one of our first sessions, with regard to my apparent inability to protect myself in complex emotional situations such as my stepfather's betrayal, that I did "not even understand the concept of self-protection." I resented the statement. It made me feel stupid—but it also seemed like a start.

We worked together for four years. I described for him the particulars of the abuse: the sandpaper burn of Shier's evening stubble on my skin; his antic Chihuahua, which defecated on the floor of the apartment and raced around on the bed when we were in it; Shier's tongue jammed into my mouth. I described the time he forced me to perform fellatio in my home while my mother and brother were away. Shier lay back on Mother's sleeping couch, self-absorbed, palming my head like a melon, supremely at ease. I told the therapist about my inability to break off the relationship with Shier, and about my mother's apparent intention to look the other way.

At the start of therapy, I speculated that the real horror of those years would prove to be the actual acts of abuse—my choking on his semen, the towel forced over my face to silence me, the rectal bleeding. After a while, I began to see that the horror was more elusive, that it included more than just betrayals and denials and being yanked around in Shier's bed like a rag doll. The enduring horror was that I had learned to accommodate brutalization. This part of the experience remained with me long after I walked out of Shier's apartment for the last time.

Caught up in someone else's psychosis, overmatched at every turn, I had concentrated on only one thing:

survival. To survive I needed to placate. My response to emotional confrontation in the years following that time, I came to see, was almost always to acquiesce, or to overreact angrily, with no option in between. Therapy led me to comprehend that I had not, as I wanted to believe, been able to tough out the trauma. I had succumbed, and others besides me had experienced the consequences of my attempt to endure. I had ahead of me now a chance to do better, to be a person less given to anger.

I visited the therapist twice a week to start with, occasionally for double sessions; then it was once a week or less frequently until we decided we'd come to a resting place. In our final sessions, I fitted the pieces of my story together differently, creating "another narrative," as therapists are wont to say, of the early years in California, a broader context for the physical and emotional damage. After that, long-term sexual abuse no longer organized the meaning of my life as it had during the years I believed that I'd simply walked away from it.

One night in 1998, driving from the town where I had been seeing the therapist forty miles upriver to my home, I suddenly felt flooded with relief. The sensation was so strong I pulled over and got out of the truck. I walked to the edge of what I knew to be an unfenced, cultivated field. At first I thought I was experiencing physical relief, the breakdown of the last bit of tension in my upper back, which, after many weeks of physical therapy, no longer required surgery. But it was something else. A stony, overbearing presence I'd been fearful of nearly all my life wasn't there anymore. I stood in the dark by the side of the road for a long while, savoring the reprieve, the sudden disappearance of this tyranny. I recalled a dream I'd had midway through my therapy. I burst through a heavy cellar door and surprised an ogre devouring the entrails of a gutted infant, alive but impassive in the grip of his hand. The ogre was enraged at being discovered. What seemed significant was that I had broken down the door. It didn't matter whether it was the door into something or the door out.

Therapy's success for me was not so much my coming to understand that I had learned as a child to tolerate acts of abuse. It was discovering a greater capacity within myself to empathize with another person's nightmare. Most of the unresolved fear and anger I once held on to has now metamorphosed into compassion, an understanding of the predicaments nearly everyone encounters, at some level, at some time, in their lives.

A commonplace about trauma, one buried deep in the psyches of American men, is that it is noble to heal alone. What I've learned in recent years, however, is that this choice sometimes becomes a path to further isolation and trouble, especially for the family and friends of the one who has been wounded. I took exactly this path, intending to bother no one with my determined effort to recalibrate my life. It took a long while for me to understand that a crucial component of recovery from trauma is learning to comprehend and accept the embrace of someone who has no specific knowledge of what happened to you, who is disinterested.

We need others to bring us back into the comity of human life. This appears to have been the final lesson for me—to appreciate someone's embrace not as forgiveness or as an amicable judgment but as an acknowledgment that, from time to time, private life becomes brutally hard for every one of us, and that without one another, without some sort of community, the nightmare is prone to lurk, waiting for an opening.

I'm not interested any longer in tracking down the details of Harry Shier's death, or in wondering how, if it is still there, I might reenter his apartment above the building on Riverside Drive to gaze out at the sky through the corner window. I'm on the alert, now, though, for an often innocuous moment, the one in which an adult man begins to show an unusual interest in the welfare of someone's young son—especially if it's my grandson. He still, at the age of nine, reaches out for my hand when we start to cross a dangerous street. ■

BODIES BRIGHT AND GREATER

Mixed-media collages by Wangechi Mutu



A solo exhibition of Wangechi Mutu's work is opening in March at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, in Durham, North Carolina.

This page: *Funkalicious fruit field*, ink, paint, plant material, collage, and plastic pearls on Mylar;
Collection of Glenn Scott Wright, London; courtesy Victoria Miro Gallery, London

Following pages: *Root of All Eves*, ink, paint, and collage on Mylar; Collection of George Hartman and Arlene Goldman, Toronto;
and *Agave you*, mixed-media collage on Mylar; Collection of Stanley and Nancy Singer, New York;
courtesy Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Los Angeles; photo by Robert Wedemeyer

Wangechi Mutu is an artist based in Brooklyn.





OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Is the Arena Football League ready for prime time?

By Nathaniel Rich

For the first three seconds it was almost possible, if you ignored the dimensions of the field and the size of the crowd, to pretend that you were watching an NFL game. The kicker measured five paces back, and one to the left. He raised his hand, rushed forward—one, two, three-four-five!—swung his leg, and his shoe popped the leather. The football was an orange bullet; it zipped over midfield and over the end zone. Then—and here was how you knew for certain that this was not the NFL—the ball hit a net and bounced back onto the field.

The “rebound net” spanned the width of the end zone and rose from field level to the tops of the uprights. Its strings were drawn tight, as on an enormous tennis racket, and it volleyed the ball into the end zone. Waiting there was New Orleans VooDoo kick returner Josh Bush, a strong, compact man who, at five feet nine inches and 165 pounds, gets side work as an extra in Hollywood movies about high school football teams. When Bush caught the ball, he was standing with his back to the rest of the field. Behind him, eight Orlando Predators were closing in, aiming for his spine.

It was just after seven o’clock on Friday, May 18: week eleven of the

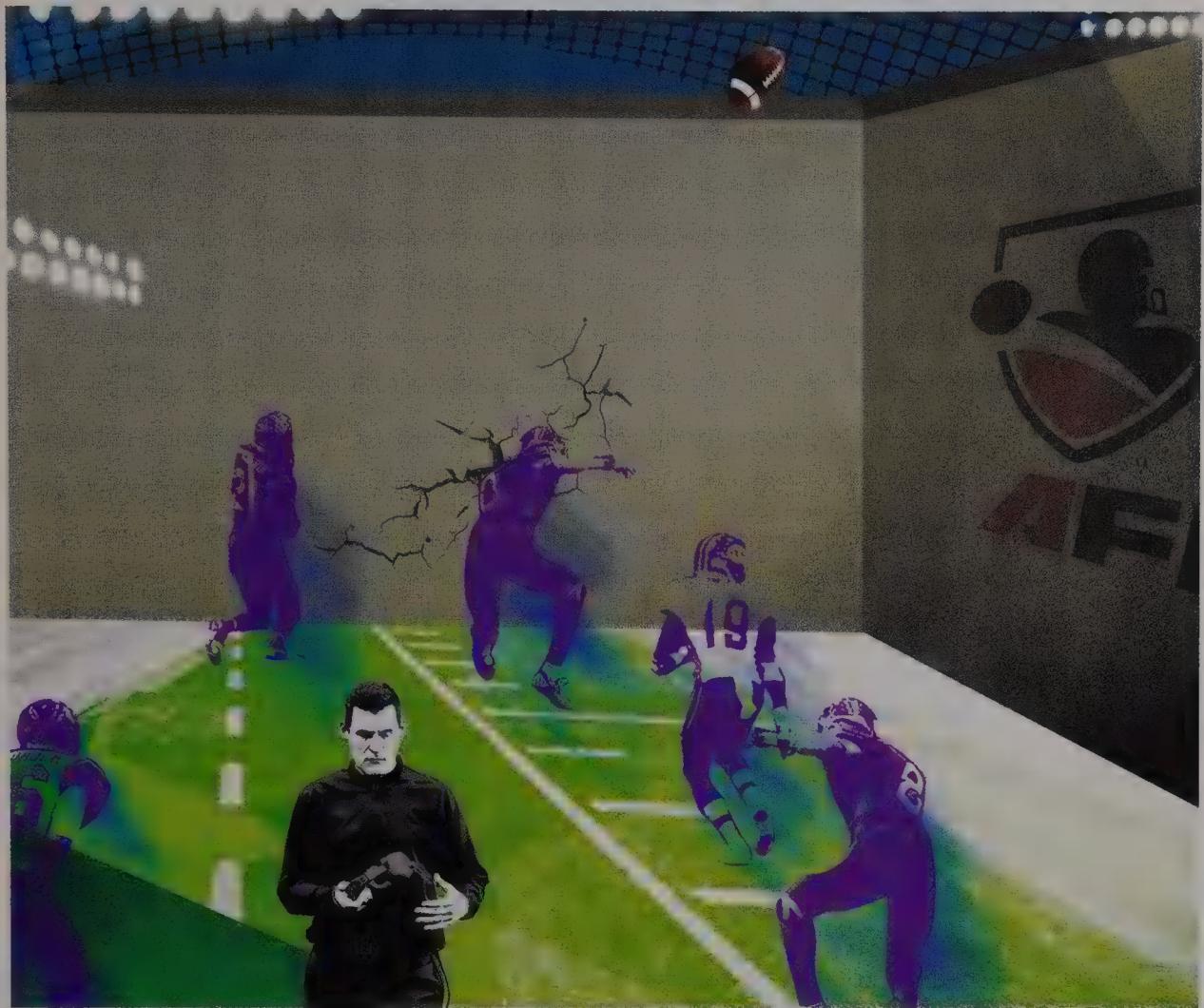
Nathaniel Rich’s second novel, *Odds Against Tomorrow*, will be published in April by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. His last article for Harper’s Magazine, “The Luckiest Woman on Earth,” appeared in the August 2011 issue.

2012 Arena Football League season. The attendance at the Graveyard (known to Hornets fans as the New Orleans Arena) was announced as 6,161, roughly one third of the venue’s capacity, but the actual number seemed much lower. The VooDoo had three wins and five losses and were fighting for a playoff spot. The Predators had made the playoffs for nineteen consecutive years, which tied them with the National Hockey League’s Detroit Red Wings for the longest active playoff streak in professional sports. But Orlando’s record now stood at a moribund one and seven; tonight represented their final chance to resuscitate their season. The teams were fairly evenly matched, and the outcome was nearly impossible to predict. The only predictable thing was the violence.

The NFL might have better athletes, larger stadiums, and a more sophisticated playbook, but when it comes to violence, the AFL wins in a blowout. This might be the reason CBS recently signed the league to a prime-time television contract; during the 2013 season, a game of the week will air every Saturday night on the CBS Sports Network. Fans who are disappointed with the NFL’s recent efforts to improve player safety will be pleasantly surprised to discover the existence of a professional football league with no such scruples. The softening of the NFL has created a niche that the AFL can fill.

Bush turned and found himself surrounded by Predators whose meager livelihoods depended on their hitting him hard enough to make him drop the ball. He juked to his left, sending a Predator spinning into a block, then spotted an opening along the right sideline. He squirted out of the end zone and dodged the outstretched arms of a tackler. He passed the five, and streaked almost to the fifteen before a tackler cornered him.

Were this the NFL, the kick returner’s decision would be clear: he’d run out-of-bounds to avoid the hit. But in the AFL you cannot run out-of-bounds, because the sidelines are four-foot-high walls. Many fields are converted hockey rinks, fifty yards long, with the ice replaced by Astro-turf and the dasher boards covered with thin foam padding. The rules of the AFL have been tweaked to minimize running plays and field goals. Punts are forbidden. The eight-man teams score fifty-four points per game on average, nearly two and a half times the NFL mean. Big pass plays are emphasized. So are big hits. Take, for instance, the kickoff, football’s most dangerous play. In the past decade, 44 percent of the NFL’s catastrophic injuries—*injuries to the head or neck that led to disability*—occurred on a kickoff. In 2011, NFL officials attempted to reduce the number of kickoffs per



game. They advanced the kicker five yards, to the thirty-five-yard line, substantially increasing the likelihood that the ball would land in the opponents' end zone, or beyond it. The rule was effective. Last year NFL teams returned 5.4 kicks per game, down from 7.9 in 2010, and concussions on kickoffs were reduced by 43 percent as a result. AFL teams, by contrast, average twelve returns. This is due in part to the high-scoring nature of the game, since a kickoff follows every scoring play. But mainly it's thanks to the rebound nets, which ensure that a kick rarely goes out-of-bounds.

Josh Bush pivoted to his right at the last second, which allowed him to run gently into the wall and end the play without being knocked senseless. If he hadn't mastered this skill, he wouldn't still be in the league. No other player on the Voodoo had more experience in the AFL, and nearly half of them were rookies. Bush, who was thirty-one, was in his eighth season. For the previous two years, Bush had played for

Orlando. The 2011 season was the best of his career: he scored nineteen touchdowns in fifteen games, and was sixth in the league in all-purpose yards, with an average of 139.3 per game. But in the final game of the regular season—on a kick return—a tackler's helmet fractured Bush's clavicle. Orlando immediately dropped him from its roster. Bush thought his career was over. "When you have an injury like that," he told me, "and being that I'm a little older in the game, at that point it's kind of mentally like, Man, is this it? Can I keep playing and still be competitive without being hurt all the time?" He started to wonder what he would do with the rest of his life.

Bush had joined the AFL for the same reason most players join the AFL: they want to play in the NFL. The AFL calls itself the "league of opportunity," the opportunity being the chance to play in a different league. That, after all, is what happened to Kurt Warner, the greatest success story in the twenty-five-year history of the AFL—one of the greatest success stories, for that matter,

in the history of the NFL. After being passed over in the NFL draft and failing his tryout for the Green Bay Packers, Warner returned to his hometown of Cedar Falls, Iowa. He took a minimum-wage job stocking shelves at a Hy-Vee grocery store and tried out for the local AFL team. Two years later, he led the Iowa Barnstormers to the first of two consecutive ArenaBowls, attracting the notice of the St. Louis Rams, who made him their third-string quarterback. After every man ahead of Warner was injured or released, he was put into the starting lineup fifteen days before the 1999 season began. He threw three touchdowns in each of his first three games, was named the league's most valuable

player, and led the Rams to their first Super Bowl championship. No AFL player has come close to replicating Warner's success, but it is safe to say that every AFL player has tried.

Josh Bush's trajectory resembled Warner's, to a point: after success in college (he graduated as Western Michigan University's all-time leading punt returner), he was passed over in the draft. NFL scouts considered him too small to play professionally, and he was not even invited to tryouts. He failed his first audition for the AFL as well. But he had been playing football since he was eight, and he refused to give it up. After Bush spent a summer playing for the Southwest Michigan Rage, a semipro team in Kalamazoo, the AFL's Grand Rapids Rampage offered him a job in 2004.

"My purpose is football," said Bush. "It's not just about the NFL—it's about more than that. It's about perseverance, getting knocked down and getting back up. Being a story that may motivate someone else to accomplish their own dream." Bush had a new dream now: he wanted to

be inducted into the AFL Hall of Fame. (There is no physical hall of fame; its members are listed on the AFL's website.) He had been looking forward to tonight's game against the Predators: "When I split ways with Orlando—well, it wasn't on good terms," said Bush. "That's the team that I feel did me a little dirty. It left a bad taste. I don't feel like I was treated fairly. So I want to have a great game." The matchup was also a rare chance to play in front of a national audience: in 2012, four VooDoo games, including this one, were broadcast on the NFL Network. It may have been too late for Bush to join the NFL, but if so, he wanted the world to see that the NFL had made a terrible mistake.

At third and ten on Orlando's nineteen-yard line, Kurt Rocco, the VooDoo's quarterback, stepped back, hesitated, then fired toward the left corner of the end zone. Bush, racing across the field on a deep slant, hauled the ball in over his shoulder and collided with the rear wall of the end zone. The impact knocked him to the turf, but the ball never left his grasp. As the crowd cheered, he rose to one knee, pausing there—praying, or recovering his senses—before finally rising to accept his teammates' congratulations.

On its very first play, Orlando connected on a forty-five-yard bomb down the center of the field, tying the game.

On the VooDoo's next play, Bush caught the ball on a sprint thirty yards downfield, stopped, fell down, leaped up, scrambled another five yards, and got knocked flat by a defensive back who looked roughly twice his size. Then Rocco threw another touchdown. Six minutes and forty-one seconds had passed since the opening kickoff. There had been eight plays from scrimmage, three of them touchdowns. The VooDoo led, 14–7.

This pace is not unusual. Every AFL offense is the Harlem Globetrotters; every defense is the Washington Generals. The short field is not the only reason for this. The league's rule book sets the defense up for humiliation. Defensive linemen are not allowed to "stunt" or "twist" or drop back into pass coverage. They

must simply try to push through the offensive linemen. One of the linebackers must stay within an imaginary box behind the line of scrimmage, and therefore can neither rush the quarterback nor guard a receiver; he is called the "Jack" linebacker, short for "Jack in the Box." On most plays Jack merely stands in no-man's-land and watches the play go on around him. Zone defenses are forbidden. So are double-teams. The offense is also allowed to send one of its wide receivers in forward motion before the snap. This means that the instant the quarterback hikes the ball, the receiver is sprinting across the line of scrimmage at full speed. That receiver almost always gets open. "A defensive back has to have a short memory," said Jon Norris, the VooDoo's former general manager, who played on one of the league's inaugural teams twenty-five years ago. "Deion Sanders is going to get beat in this league."

There is little incentive for a team to kick a field goal, because the uprights are slender tuning forks, with arms only nine feet apart, less than half the distance between NFL goalposts. The defense's only hope is a turnover. At the end of the first quarter there have been seven possessions and six touchdowns. With

the last of these, the VooDoo led, 27–14.

Now that I'm older," said Bush, "I see these younger guys, they're who I was when I was younger.... They're still trying to get to the next level in their career. That just makes me work much harder. My window may be closed for that, but there's nothing like coming out and still working as if that was going to happen."

Bush didn't mention him by name, but the "younger guy" to whom he was referring was his fellow wide receiver Le'Nard "LJ" Damon Castile Jr., who was twenty-four. In practice, Castile would strap what looked like a gas mask around his head. Its mouthpiece had two pinprick holes to restrict the intake of oxygen. "It jump-starts you into getting back in shape," said Castile, who couldn't run any faster than a jog when he wore the mask. "It cuts your workouts in

half." When he wore it he sounded like Darth Vader, his breathing belabored and amplified, and he might have looked like Darth Vader too were it not for his dreadlocks, which flew behind him like octopus tentacles as he ran.

Unlike Bush, Castile looks like an NFL player: six feet three inches, 220 pounds, with broad shoulders and long arms. In La Marque, Texas, a small city between Galveston and Houston, Castile was the star quarterback at his high school. But at the University of Houston, as he grew taller and faster and stronger, it became clear to his coaches that he had the physique to be a professional wide receiver. Castile switched to the position as a sophomore, but it didn't come naturally to him. He had to learn how to run a crisp, precise pattern, how to stay inbounds on a deep out route, how to block. He felt anxious his first two years as a receiver—"like a deer," he said. He did not get drafted when he graduated, but the Cleveland Browns invited him to training camp in 2011. In their first preseason game, against the Super Bowl champion Packers, Castile received the ball on a reverse, burst free of a tackler, and raced along the sideline for a first down. It was his proudest moment as a Brown. He climbed the depth chart, surprising the team with his speed and athleticism, and each week he survived to play another game—until the final hour of training camp. Castile was the last man cut from the roster.

His goal now was to become the best receiver in the AFL. The problem, however, is that the skills you need to succeed in the AFL don't transfer easily to the NFL. Precise route-running isn't necessary, because you're always facing one-on-one coverage. Since Castile was stronger and taller than most of his opponents, he could usually make up for any imprecision in his routes with his size. And because of the field's dimensions, he couldn't take advantage of his speed—if you run at full tilt you risk breaking your legs (or your neck) on the wall. "The play is lazy, sloppy," said Castile. "It's more about angles. The fastest guy is

not necessarily the best guy." And he was aware that with every play he risked a career-ending injury. "Physically," he said, "this league is bad for me. I can't work on the things I need to work on in practice or in games. I have to do that work on my own. But I pray that an NFL scout sees my potential."

When the game against the Predators began, Castile was leading his team with 625 receiving yards and fifteen touchdowns. Bush was second, with 601 and thirteen. In the first quarter, Bush had pulled ahead in yards and tied Castile in touchdowns. Castile wasn't concerned—Orlando's defense was as terrible as any AFL team's, and there were three quarters left. It was taking New Orleans an average of three and a half plays to score a touchdown.

But then Orlando drastically changed tactics. The decision seemed quirky at first, a desperation move. But as the quarter developed, it began to feel like Orlando was committing a form of AFL heresy, threatening the integrity not just of the game but perhaps of the entire league.

After scoring at the start of the second quarter, Orlando had to kick off, trailing 27–21. To the VooDoo's surprise, the Predators tried an onside kick—a high-risk, high-reward gambit to force the receiving team to fumble or miss the ball and produce a turnover. The play succeeded: the ball bounced high, and a Predator nabbed it. Three minutes later, Orlando scored another touchdown: 28–27.

Orlando tried a second onside kick several minutes later, and failed to recover the ball only because of a penalty. Then, after Rocco threw an interception and the Predators scored a field goal, they attempted yet another onside kick and recovered this one too. On the sideline, the VooDoo's coach, Pat O'Hara, stared at the field in astonishment. Castile stood forlorn, helmet in hand, as Orlando scored again. With less than a minute left in the quarter the Predators had scored thirty-three consecutive points. They led, 47–27.

The onside kick is rarely attempted in the NFL, because if you don't recover the kick, the opposing team has the ball with excellent field posi-

tion. But Orlando's coaching staff had realized that the calculation is different in the AFL. With a smaller field and fewer players, the odds that the kicking team will recover the ball are significantly higher. And since AFL offenses score on most possessions anyway, sacrificing field position makes little difference. The best way to stop an AFL offense is through a turnover. And what play is more likely to produce a turnover than the onside kick? Orlando had found a loophole in the AFL game.

The VooDoo finally gained possession with eighteen seconds remaining in the half. After two quick passes to Castile and Bush, the VooDoo were twenty-six yards from the end zone with seven seconds left. Rocco hiked the ball and dropped back; almost instantly, one of the defensive linemen broke loose and barreled toward him. Rocco ran to his right and, just before he was hit, launched a wild pass downfield. Castile was waiting at the edge of the end zone, sandwiched between two defensive backs. The ball was high, Castile leaped, and it was suddenly obvious to everybody in the arena—and everybody watching the game on the NFL Network—what the scouts saw in him. He didn't jump so much as climb through the air, rising above the outstretched arms of a defender, and at the highest point of his ascent he ripped the ball out of the sky: touchdown.

It was halftime, and the teams ran into the locker rooms. The Predators led 47–34. Josh Bush was nodding his head to some internal rhythm. LJ Castile was doing a little hip-shimmy dance. Coach O'Hara's face was fixed in an expression of agony.

In 1991, when Pat O'Hara watched his first AFL game, he was a rookie quarterback in training camp with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He was lucky to be there. Though he had been a quarterback at the University of Southern California, which has one of the nation's preeminent football programs, he barely played. At first, he was backup to Rodney Peete, a Heisman Trophy finalist. Then, in

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his junior year, one of O'Hara's teammates injured him in practice. A freshman named Todd Marinovich took over and led the team to a Rose Bowl victory. In his senior year, O'Hara played in only one game. But Tampa's scouts liked his arm enough to select him in the tenth round of the draft.

In training camp with the Buccaneers, O'Hara remembers watching television one evening with fellow rookie Chris Chandler, a future seventeen-year veteran of the NFL who twice made the Pro Bowl. The two quarterbacks were flipping through the channels when they came across a football game. The local AFL team, the Tampa Bay Storm, was playing the Detroit Drive in the ArenaBowl, the league championship, which takes place in August. O'Hara laughed when he saw the sideline walls, the size of the field, the rebound nets. "I'll never play in that league," he told Chandler.

In the Buccaneers' final preseason game, the coach called O'Hara's name in the third quarter, and he led the team down the field for a touchdown. That night he watched the game on TV. Joe Namath was one of the commentators, and he raved about O'Hara's style of play. Namath said he had a bright future ahead of him. O'Hara still has the broadcast on VHS. "I showed my son," said O'Hara. "He was like, 'Who's Joe Namath?'"

O'Hara made the team that year, made the roster of the San Diego Chargers the next year, and later attended training camp with the Washington Redskins. But he never played in a regular-season NFL game.

In 1995 he signed with the Orlando Predators. He stayed for six years, leading them to two ArenaBowl appearances. "I spent my entire professional playing career waiting for an opportunity," he said. "Orlando gave it to me."

O'Hara looks like a Hollywood casting director's fantasy of an NFL quarterback. He has trim brown hair and a strong, handsome face with sharp brown eyes and a slightly flattened nose. He is six feet three and, at forty-four, still looks as if he could put on a helmet and lead the VooDoo to the ArenaBowl. Sometimes, at the end of VooDoo practices, he

throws perfect spirals the length of the field. His motion is graceful, effortless. His players stay late just to watch him throw.

If you've seen Oliver Stone's 1999 film *Any Given Sunday*, you've seen O'Hara. He plays the backup quarterback. During the games he holds a clipboard and wears a headset, trailing behind Al Pacino on the sideline. Since 1997, when he was cast in a small role in *The Waterboy*, O'Hara has served as a football consultant for film and television. He scouts locations, designs plays, and recruits extras. He has taught Jamie Foxx, Adam Sandler, and Mark Wahlberg how to carry themselves like football players.

O'Hara met his wife, Billie, in Orlando. She was a Prowler, a Predators cheerleader. The O'Haras built a house in Orlando and raised two sons, now ten and twelve. When O'Hara left the city for nearly a decade—playing for the Toronto Phantoms and then the Tampa Bay Storm, with whom he won another ArenaBowl—his family stayed behind. His wife worked as an Orlando Magic cheerleader, then became the Prowlers' dance director. In 2010, O'Hara was named head coach of the Predators. The team advanced to the playoffs each of the next two years, but both times failed to reach the ArenaBowl.

O'Hara won't say it directly, but Josh Bush is not the only person the Predators "did dirty" in 2011. Two days after losing in last year's playoffs, Orlando fired O'Hara. Then they fired his wife.

Loyalty, needless to say, is not prized in the AFL. Until this season, no contract could extend longer than a year. Nobody objects to the lack of stability; in the league of opportunity, everyone is looking for a promotion to the NFL—not only the players but the coaching staffs, the referees, and the cheerleaders. Franchises don't last long, either. Nearly every year there are expansion teams, while others fold or move. Recent casualties have included the Austin Wranglers, the Carolina Cobras, the Detroit Fury, the Indiana Firebirds, the Los Angeles Avengers, the Nashville Kats, and the Oklahoma City Yard Dawgz. The

New Orleans VooDoo were once the Bossier-Shreveport Battle Wings.

The league itself is unreliable. In 2009, the entire season was canceled. Many team owners had hoped that television networks would begin broadcasting the games years ago. It was a reasonable assumption. The NFL, after all, is the most profitable sports league in the world, earning more than the National Basketball Association and Major League Baseball combined. It receives an estimated \$4 billion in television revenue every year. Shouldn't a second, faster-paced football league that plays during the NFL's off-season earn enough to generate a profit? In the late 1990s, in anticipation of a national television contract, teams began to sell for as much as \$16 million, attracting NFL team owners: Dallas's Jerry Jones and New Orleans's Tom Benson each started teams. Jon Bon Jovi founded a team in Philadelphia and christened it the Soul. In 1999, around the time Kurt Warner was named the NFL's MVP, the AFL reached its height of popularity. A developmental league, the AF2, was formed, with teams in such cities as Hidalgo, Texas, and Kennewick, Washington. Players' salaries increased steadily, to an average of more than \$200,000. But a major TV deal never materialized, and attendance for both arena leagues dipped; some franchises began to lose as much as \$4 million a year. In 2008 the AFL, \$14 million in the red, filed for bankruptcy.

A year later, several owners bought the rights to the AFL. The new league was structured as a single entity rather than an association of franchises to prevent the players from organizing a labor union. Owners in the AFL, as one general manager told me, were terrorized by the "fear of a collective-bargaining agreement." Last year players in the league earned \$400 a week during the season, with the exception of starting quarterbacks, who made \$1,600. Before the 2012 season began, players threatened to strike over the low salaries. On the day of the first game, Matt Shaner, the owner of the Pittsburgh Power, invited his players to dinner at an Olive Garden. Halfway

through the meal, he fired the entire team. The players stormed out. But by game time, many of them had dropped their demands and rejoined the team. Shaner filled the rest of the roster with replacement players. Pittsburgh won the game by two touchdowns.

Last August, however, the players finally succeeded in establishing a collective-bargaining agreement. This season they will make as much as \$830 a game, though starting quarterbacks will be limited to \$1,080. Since the contract was approved before the CBS deal came through, the players' union will miss out on most of the revenue from television licensing.

Many of the VooDoo players live in subsidized team housing in the Magnolia Ridge Apartments, a cheerless complex that abuts I-10 in Metairie, a suburb ten minutes northwest of downtown New Orleans. At halftime of each home game, the Jumbotron in the Graveyard shows a new short film of a VooDoo player giving a tour of his "crib." We see the couch where the player watches television; the cabinet in the kitchenette filled with ramen packets; the dismal, perfunctory pool in the courtyard, seen through the venetian blinds; the closet with a handful of hangers. There are two players housed in each crib, and each crib is identical.

Coaches are not covered by the collective-bargaining agreement. The head coach, the defensive coordinator, and two assistants, I was told, must divide among themselves a salary of \$110,000. (The AFL would not confirm that figure.) They can be fired at any time, with no warning, as Pat O'Hara learned in Orlando. But because the team owners are a close-knit group, hiring can occur just as quickly. Ten minutes after O'Hara was released by the Predators, he received an offer from the VooDoo. He accepted immediately.

"I have a family," said O'Hara. "I have two kids. I talked to my wife, and we weren't in a position to wait around and be cool." Besides, he said, Louisiana was fertile ground for football recruitment, and AFL coaches are responsible for scouting their own talent.

New Orleans is only a ten-hour drive, or a one-hour flight, from his family in Orlando. And the VooDoo had the league's worst record in 2011: three and thirteen, with zero home wins. "There was only one way to go," said O'Hara. "Up."

In the first interview he gave as head coach of the VooDoo, O'Hara announced that he had three goals for the season: win the division, win the ArenaBowl, and beat the Orlando Predators.

The VooDoo kicked off to begin the second half. To nobody's surprise, O'Hara ordered, vindictively, an onside kick. Orlando recovered, but two plays later Predators quarterback Chris Leak—who just six years ago led the Florida Gators to a national championship—was intercepted. On the next play, Rocco threw a thirty-four-yard touchdown, his fifth of the game. New Orleans was within seven, 47–40.

O'Hara tried another onside kick. It failed again, and two minutes later Orlando scored.

The Predators had their first kicking opportunity of the half, but inexplicably Orlando's coach, Bret Munsey, decided to abandon the onside kick. Perhaps he had been shamed by O'Hara. Or perhaps he had received a halftime phone call from a league authority ordering him to cut it out, his new strategy having crossed some line of decency, exposing the frivolity of the AFL, thus breaking the league's pact with the viewers, who expect big pass plays, not strategy. Whatever the reason, Munsey didn't try another onside kick for the rest of the game. Decisions like this may explain why Orlando, after nineteen excellent seasons, missed the playoffs in 2012.

After the return, Rocco connected with Castile three times in quick succession. On the third completion, Castile was running at full speed across the end zone when he caught the ball, and instead of jamming into the barrier he leaped over it, clearing the wall entirely and landing at the feet of several fans sitting in the front row. Leak threw another interception, and at the end of the third quarter the game was tied, 54–54. O'Hara allowed himself a quiet fist pump.

He was standing on the field when he did so, roughly ten yards behind the line of scrimmage. It is a further peculiarity of AFL games that one of the coaches must stand on the field with the players. Because there are no sidelines, the players who are not on the field are confined to bullpens at either end of the field. On the turf, the coach can communicate directly with his quarterback. But the image is an awkward one: the coach lurking behind his team, trying to avoid being hit by an errant tackler and seeming as if he might step in at any moment.

For the moment there was no need. Kurt Rocco, whom O'Hara invited to the team after an inconsistent rookie year with the Cleveland Gladiators, was playing the best football of his life. He was second in the league in passing, averaging 311 yards per game. At six feet five inches and 230 pounds, he bears a strong resemblance to the young Pat O'Hara. He comes from a baseball family in Cincinnati: his grandfather was Ray "Snacks" Shore, a pitcher for the St. Louis Browns; two of his uncles played in the minors. Rocco began to focus on football only at the end of high school, after a late growth spurt.

He was accepted to Mount Union College, a small liberal-arts school in Alliance, Ohio, that perennially has one of the top Division III football programs in the country: the USC of DIII. On his first day of practice, Rocco was one of about ten freshmen trying out for quarterback. Two survived cuts: Rocco and Cecil Shorts III, now a receiver for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Rocco improved each year, but he was stuck behind Greg Micheli, whose career quarterback rating is the highest in the history of college football, all divisions included. When Rocco was finally given a chance his senior year, he threw for 3,929 yards, leading Mount Union to the national championship game.

"I felt like I changed people's minds," said Rocco. "I had a lot of people come up to me at the end of the season saying I did really good. Some people even said, 'With your size and your arm, I think you'll get a

chance to do something in the future.' And here I am, I guess."

His mechanics were not perfect, his footwork not as deft as it could be, but he knew he had a professional-caliber arm. He waited for a phone call from his agent, hoping for a shot at the NFL. None ever came.

His agent finally asked whether he might be willing to try out for the AFL. Rocco didn't know the rules, but he agreed to audition for the Gladiators. He was offered a job almost immediately.

"I was excited," said Rocco. "I got to continue my career and play football for what I consider to be a professional team. I mean, you're getting paid to do it, even if the pay isn't tremendously great. This is obviously not the NFL, but it's a starting point. Kurt Warner always credited the speed of this league, how fast you have to get the ball out of your hands, with helping him transition to the NFL."

Among his teammates Rocco had a reputation for being serious, intense, cerebral. In a game against the Pittsburgh Power last April, one of the receivers botched his route but managed to break free anyway. Rocco passed to him for a touchdown, but took no joy in it. As his teammates celebrated, Rocco stewed.

During his rookie year in Cleveland, the self-imposed pressure had hampered his play. "The anxiety level was really high before each game. I didn't eat a single pregame meal. I had so much running through my head. I'm still trying to learn how not to let myself get out of control by thinking too much."

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Leak found T. T. Toliver on a deep cross for a touchdown. The VooDoo's defensive back, having now been burned by Toliver for 186 receiving yards and five touchdowns, slammed the unsuspecting receiver into the back wall. Toliver hit the ground but bounced back up and, as he had after every touchdown, raced over to the VooDoo bullpen. He held the ball aloft and, as he performed an elaborate victory dance, laughed in the face of his old coach, Pat O'Hara.

On the next play, Bush raced past his man and Rocco lofted a thirty-one-yard pass. Bush reached out and brought it in, crashing into the end zone for his third touchdown of the game. He kneeled and prayed. It was 61-61.

Orlando had a chance to take the lead again, but a fourth-down pass into the end zone was swatted to the ground. With seven minutes left, Rocco passed for his ninth touchdown. The fans, glutted on touchdowns by this point, clapped politely.

They cheered louder when the VooDoo's Jeremy Kellem made an acrobatic play that could happen only in the AFL. Kellem—a quick, small, deeply religious defensive back from North Lauderdale, Florida, who prays aloud throughout each game—dove after a pass thrown to Toliver on an outside cut. Kellem tipped the ball out of Toliver's hands; it caromed off the sideline wall and bounced off Kellem's knee into the air. Just before it landed, Kellem, lying on the ground, squeezed his legs together, catching the ball between them. The referees looked at the instant replay and decided that the ball had hit the player and the wall but not the ground, so the interception was ruled valid. The VooDoo gained possession, leading 68-61.

There was only a minute left, but in the AFL a quarterback cannot take a knee and let the clock run out. If the offense doesn't advance the ball, the clock stops automatically. Since running plays almost always result in lost yards, the team with the lead must continue to pass, again and again, like a song stuck on repeat, until the game is over. With a few seconds left, Rocco found Bush twenty-six yards downfield, and the clock, mercifully, wound down.

The postgame press conference took place in a media room off the ramp that leads to the field. The Hornets' logo was covered, at least partially, by a VooDoo banner. There were five reporters in the five rows of seats.

"Kurt made some tremendous throws tonight," said O'Hara. "Great night for him on a national stage."

The coaches' wives, four of them in all, entered and sat together in

one of the unoccupied rows. O'Hara's wife and children had traveled from Orlando for the game.

"We had a horrendous second quarter," said O'Hara. "It was the Twilight Zone ... You're always going to face adversity in this crazy game."

A reporter asked whether the game had any special significance for him.

"Yes," he said, and paused. "It does. It's special for my family. It's something, honestly, I've thought about for nine months.... I'm not going to lie, it does feel good."

Months later, after leading the VooDoo to the playoffs but failing to reach the ArenaBowl, O'Hara was offered a two-year contract extension. Rocco also renewed for two years. Castile, after spending the off-season working as a security guard in Houston, joined the Utah Blaze. Josh Bush, despite leading the AFL in yards per catch in 2012, has not yet signed with any team. Thanks to the CBS contract, the 2013 season may bring the AFL greater legitimacy and financial security. But this night in May, the players seem overjoyed simply to have won—and to have survived the game without suffering any catastrophic injuries.

After the end of every home game at the Graveyard, fans are allowed to walk onto the field. There they greet the VooDoo players, who tonight, having left their helmets behind, emerge grinning from the locker room. Teenage boys gaze awestruck at players twice, three times their size, and sometimes they work up the courage to ask one to pose for a photograph. A crowd of screaming preteen girls swarms Kurt Rocco. They ask him to sign footballs, posters, T-shirts, faces. Rocco's serious demeanor cracks; he can't keep from laughing.

Finally the children's chaperones tell them to go. It's late—the game lasted nearly three hours. But none of the little kids want to leave the field. And they're not the only ones. Despite the hour, despite the brutal collisions into the wall, despite the nineteen touchdowns and twenty kickoffs—despite everything, none of the members of the New Orleans VooDoo want to leave the field either.

THE HIDDEN PERSON

By Salvatore Scibona

All her things fit into a canvas bag, and she took it with her everywhere. It weighed about as much as a hen. She kept a pot in it because you never knew when you would need coffee. She wore a black sweater suit, a knit shawl, nothing memorable—except that her throat and clavicles were sheathed in a stout white collar that went right up to her jaw and made of her young face a forbidding object. Her skin was bad, coarse, her knuckles bulbous. But she was clean. Her bright hair maintained its shape even in the weather. Her conversation was always a little in disarray, which suited unfussy movement from this to that. If she had a few krónur she spent them, usually on makeup from a catalogue. Her mind was a house she had built alone and furnished with hearsay picked up from

the stables and the streets. She had lived all over the eastern part of the country and much of the south.

Her name was Unnur. She came to this parish during a period of glorious

cused her of petty crimes on the order of eating cakes, boxing the ears of high-born children in her charge, and stealing fancy lady things; and everybody had heard of a certain calamity that had

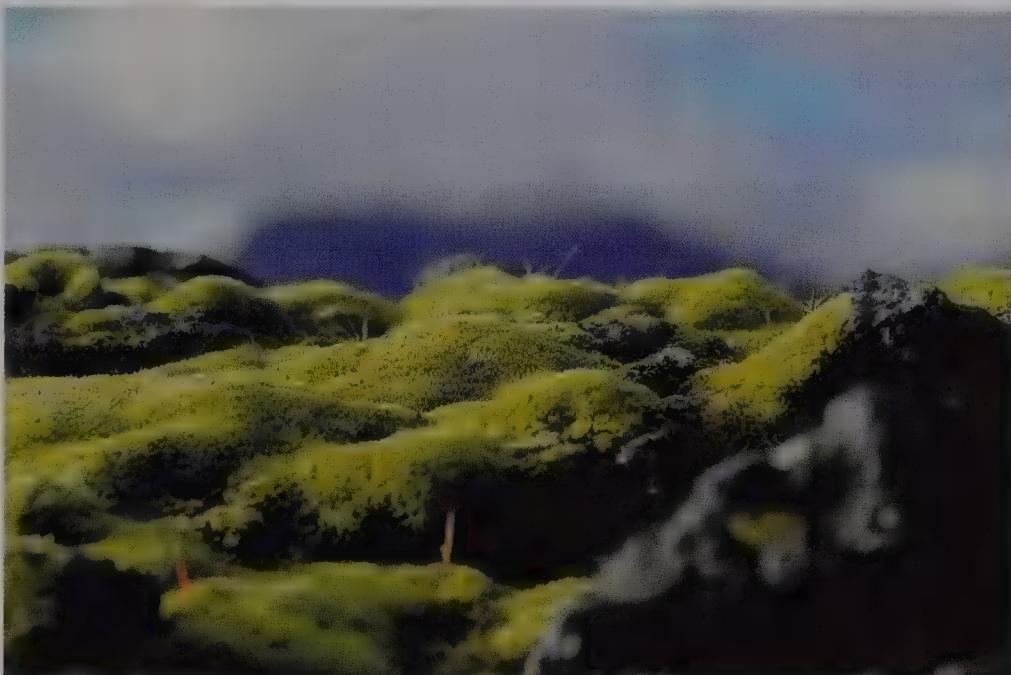
befallen her in childhood, so naturally people began to concoct invidious fables about her from the moment she arrived.

The calamity had gone like this: Some time ago, on the eastern fjords, there was a smallholding where a widow lived and where the parish sometimes put foundling children. After a spring thaw, the widow's brother set out to visit her.

As he approached, a ghastly smell nearly turned him back around. Deep in the cotton grass, at a distance from the house, the widow's corpse was rotting.

Inside, Unnur sat stitching by the stove. Her scalp was stuck here and there with patches of scabrous rag. To burn off Unnur's fleas, the widow had doused the girl's head with boiling grease. She was eight years old, gray, exceptionally well mannered, and starving. Someone had stolen the salt cod they had put away for winter, she

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weather. Perpetually snowbound inland valleys had turned into excellent pastures. Free hands for any kind of work were scarce. Even suspect girls like herself were getting hired in the houses of decent people. But unfortunately she fell into the employ of Magnus, the layabout who played the pastor at the church here, and of Fritha, his wife. Magnus did treat the girl in a Christian way at first. He praised her stitching, for example.

Unnur had come here from an eastern parish where the people had ac-

explained. After the widow had succumbed, Unnur had dragged the body into the snow with the help of the horse, which had since wandered off.

She brought the visitor some coffee, apologizing that she had no food to offer. Then something happened that would form the key to all the allegations that later trailed her. The visitor gave her a piece of chocolate, and rather than eat it right away she put it in her sweater pocket.

The girl might have nursed the old woman to the end, but maybe not; she might have scrupulously divided whatever food had remained, but who could prove she hadn't hidden some extra portion for herself? Here the sweet that went right into her pocket was evidence enough for the jackals who hunt sin over coffee in the kitchens of country towns. In any event, the authorities of that parish decided she probably had some demon in her blood and shunted her down the coast. So began the career of rambling that led her to the pastor's house in Bjarnavík, where the new prosperity bewildered everyone and the farmers were coming down after roundup driving flocks fat with mountain sedge.

It was a year after she arrived that some ewes went missing. This happened far beyond the glacier, but Unnur was wary anyway. Slanders generally stuck to her like tar. Soon a couple of lambs turned up with hocks that bled from sores in which lead shot was discovered. She rested a little easier: to turn a firearm on a healthy sheep was outrageous, but it was not witchcraft.

Only someone with contempt for society could have done such a thing. And in fact the flocks at issue had been climbing in a range that belonged to just such a figure—the recluse Gudmundur Jökulsson, who had purchased that whole far valley back when nobody else could extract a living from the ice. Now buttercups and grass were growing thick as a beard up there, if you could believe it, and hardly a hoof on the place. Nobody had asked his permission to graze in his range because no one had seen the recluse in recent times. His actual existence came into question, and thus his property rights. Some alleged he belonged to the race who live among us unseen, except when they choose to show themselves, the people Eve did not have time to

wash as children and hid from God because she was ashamed.

Everyone hated the recluse, so Unnur knew he was a saint. When she raised the question of his being one of the hidden people to Fritha, the old woman told her to shut her mouth. There would be no talk of such creatures in that house.

But Icelanders had been contending with hidden people since the first settlement, and if there were no hidden people, how should Unnur account for the slovenly friend who sometimes, when she was alone in a cave or a dark room, came and showed his back to her? She had not come so

far on her own by disbelieving her wits.

Magnus inevitably started to splay his feathers at the girl: Would she like to listen to his radio? To look at his stamp collection? To sit a while and discuss the transmigration of souls? He also gave her cookies. She did love to eat, especially when a man gave her something with sugar in it. One day, after he had spent the morning in a chair in the stable, smoking while she mucked the stalls, he invited her to help him minister to some foreign sailors who had run aground on the beach. He gave her a little time to clean herself first. That she not only went along, which she could hardly have refused to do, but also applied pigmented powder to her face might satisfy some that she planned to do immoral things. Be that as it may, no such sailors existed.

On the road, while they walked, the pastor spoke of profound mysteries. Unnur found them unanswerable and yawned, wishing for coffee. He led her to a sheltered place in the precarious rocks. He was propounding a theory, of his own invention, that true mercy could show itself only in backward forms—in the guise of punishment, for example, or in the wish to do what was otherwise disgusting.

This discourse had not gone long before he hugged her roughly. They struggled. They had gone too far from town for anyone to hear her shrieking. She fell on the sloping ground. She reached behind her for something to throw and came up with only a handful of dirt. She got to her feet, threatening him with it.

The pastor prayed aloud that she should have compassion on him. His heart was like the hearts of other people, a Christian heart. And he tugged at the knot in his tie.

Unnur cursed and threw the dirt at him. It only dusted his pants. With beatific, welling eyes, and one hand still plucking at his throat, the old man forgave her for the dirt, he forgave the dirt itself, and he lunged for her. She grabbed her head and ducked, and his free hand swiped the empty space before him. His foot reached toward a place that didn't exist.

"Damn it, Mother!" he hissed as he fell backward, all his limbs swimming, and landed headfirst with a crack on the rocks behind him.

Say what you will about the girl, she belonged only to herself, and wasted no time examining her horror or ogling the scoundrel's bloody skull. She saw right away that the whole sorry sequence of her previous employments was coming back like a bull chasing her, this time with its horns down. She was not going

to wait here to be denounced, and condemned, and hanged.

So she sneaked up the beach to the next settlement, stole a bicycle from a cow barn, provisioned herself from an unlocked pantry, and fled north into the barren interior. She didn't want to be an outlaw or a hermit. She wanted to live among other people and to be clean, and for the men to leave her alone and the women to respect her, but wherever she went people would make all these things impossible, and she was so angry she cursed aloud at the trail, the bicycle, clouds. Her belongings rode in her canvas bag, which she had tied with twine to her shoulders. On the third day of her trek, a stone lodged in one of the bicycle's sprockets and broke the chain.

"Get behind me, Satan," she said, pushing the bicycle, stomping down the ashy path. She would not have known how to head back now even if she had wanted to.

Then, far across the treeless expanse of moss and rubble she had just traversed, a spot appeared. At length it showed itself to be moving, and as it grew it took the shape of a horse and rider pulling a dray. With no place to hide, she turned and continued walk-

ing, steady on her feet, making as though she owned the whole country. She came to a path of heavier cinders that more closely approximated a road. She followed it as the figures pursued her. Her diaphragm would not go down far enough to let the air in all the way. The horse and its person went behind a butte, then reemerged on the butte's near side. Soon she heard the horse's hooves. In a spasm of dread and resolve, she turned and stabbed her feet in the ash and faced her pursuer as he approached.

The horse was shaggy, skewbald, rusty and white. Its yellow beard whipped in the wind. In the saddle sat a mound of ash with a man stuck in it. The head bent, the face hidden. His scrambled hair was flecked with lava dust. The horse kept on coming at her. It sneezed. The rider's head fell back. His hair came away from his eyes. His mouth fell open.

He was the recluse Gudmundur Jökulsson—she knew him at once. And he was asleep.

It was untrue what one heard—that the recluse's crooked devil hips made him go sidesaddle. He sat upright even in sleep, tottering only at the neck, feet loose in his stirrups, the horse's flanks squeezed between his legs.

She snapped her fingers at the horse, but it never even broke its pace.

It passed her right by and kept going.

It was about midnight. Low sun. She continued into the particulate cloud the dray had raised. She was nineteen, alone in high wool stockings, her foolish red hair stuck all over with cinders. The road turned to follow a glacial riverbank from which junipers grew like mangy fur in thickets that she would have liked to destroy. Rain. Then hail: a continuous volleying of bird shot. And she started to cry.

The trail switchbacked toward a high ridge. Birds squabbled for shelter amid the foliage of the only tree. The bicycle punished her on the slopes, but she would not give it up. She came to the top—no, nearly. Then the top at last, and a valley spilled under her, glowing with pink lichens, moss, and heavy tides of grass under the low clouds. Some structures were submerged in the greenery, their walls broken down, their turf roofs subsided.

One habitable homestead sat in a mown field. In the open mouth of the stone barn a hay rake presided, its wooden wheels rotting, a tarp tied over its teeth. She saw for many miles. Nobody about. The nauseating recognition that bad luck was forcing her to do something shameful sent a thrill of freedom through her heart. She went toward the homestead in longer paces, down the valley wall, to the field, to the doorway of the barn. Her sinners' legs carried her under the timber lintel.

Inside, a chair, a jacket folded on it. The dray parked in the shadows. Straw and pebbles underfoot. Dank. She went through a swinging door, and the sudden dark engulfed her. Somewhere the horse was breathing slow and stertorous. She groped for it. A girl and a horse alone in the dark. A dream of speed. It was late summer. She had not known proper darkness for months, and the building seemed to expand, the invisible walls to race away. The horse's vaporous breath came to her hand.

Then a rustle as of a chicken scrambling, some yards off. A run of wet and helpless human coughs. The dusty floral smell of hay.

"Hello, sir? Is there someone there?" Dizzily searching out the lost door. She cleared her throat. "My name is Hallveig Jónsdóttir. It's—it's raining."

His voice, when she heard it, did not come from anywhere in particular but from the building itself and the space it enclosed, which now coextended with the limits of the universe and also with the limits of her mind. The smell of meat and coffee on a man's breath.

Then a flame. Around the flame, a lamp formed.

He was unafraid, unstartled, as though he expected her. Even freshly woken up, the eyes behind the lamp were wide with trust. The skin of his face was tighter and more placid than she would have expected from a man his reputed age. His solitude had preserved him like vinegar. His clothes were many layers of filthy rags.

She was—she was looking for a night's rest in the stable, if he didn't mind the intrusion. She had lost the road. Had she woken him?

Not really, the recluse said, he was only napping. He couldn't stay awake these days. A flu that hadn't left him

in a year. He said, "I sleep where the wind blows me down," and laughed.

A blanket on the straw on the floor had his shape in it. The bearded horse watched her.

"What a lovely beast," she said. She gave it her hand to smell, but it turned away and huffed.

"Don't listen to such softhearted nonsense, my dear," he told the horse. "You're a homely nag, that's all."

He smiled, sneezed, and went back to smiling.

He led her out of the barn. Her brain whirred with fear and plots. She followed him across the sodden yard, fizzling with hail, into his house, a plastered room with a wooden kitchen attached and a ladder going to a loft with a room he said she could use. At the door he tied on his lambskin house shoes. The red back of his neck was crinkled like foil.

"May I go up now?" she asked.

"I'll show you the pantry," he said, "in case you should need."

The rained-on talcum covering Unnur's hot face was like a clay mask as it dried. Behind his lamp he showed her through his stacks of pickled tripe to the lean-to with a basin in it that constituted the kitchen, and he gave her a cup of tinny water that smacked her throat. He hoisted her bag. She followed him up the ladder.

He swung open the door to a room that had a cot, a chair, a vanity with the mirror missing from its frame; she stood outside the room looking into it as he waved the lamp around, stooping under the eaves.

Hail besieged the house while she slept.

In the morning, having discovered the state of the bicycle, the recluse insisted she let him see to its chain. He arranged the bicycle in the kitchen on its derrière and shoulders, his admiration undisguised. He said to the bicycle, "My, but I've always hoped to meet one like you up close."

Coffee burbled. With ceremonial attention, he put a nail to cook in the fire, inserted it in the place of the busted pin, trimmed it, and whacked the molten point to give it a second head.

"Where are you traveling," he asked, "with your hair done up so nice?"

"You're handy there, for someone who doesn't use a bicycle himself," she said.

"Why, thank you. I must say, however: chains are chains." He coughed. Liquid rose to his throat and he swallowed it.

"And you're done with farming now?" she asked.

"Not exactly," he said. "My neighbor Ólafur in the next valley has borrowed my herd until I'm well again. Pity we've had such lovely summers when I have no use for them. My Birgitta would have delighted in all the figworts. That was my dear wife while she lived. You might even sow a vegetable garden. I myself don't care for vegetables."

"And you would really kill any lost lamb that merely crosses your fence like people say?" she asked, intending to corner him somehow, but he only turned a pedal with his hand, while the spinning spokes hypnotized him. "That depends if I was hungry," he said. "No one down there can say I ever billeted them for the grass consumed, or for the shotgun shells they owe me." The sound chain ran smoothly over the sprockets, and he greased it with lanolin.

"Heavens, I did sleep well," she said.

"That room was my Birgitta's sleeping place when we quarreled," he said. "It has her spirit in it, so I sleep down here or in the barn. She gives me dreams. Yesterday, I dreamt I saw her on the trails. I wanted her to turn around and look at me, but she wouldn't do it. She sometimes used to look right at you, just from your asking with your mind."

Unnur blew, blew again, sipped, but recoiled as the coffee burned her mouth. Her throat shook and the coffee went in.

"Dark and peaceful, the upstairs, isn't it? I hardly go up there any longer. My lungs."

"But you're hale. From your chin up, I'd put you at forty-five. Smooth as a tongue."

"I'm descended from kings and seals, that's why. However, my lungs have sand in them these days. Will you take porridge? You ought to fortify yourself. I'll need to set off this morning for a visit at my neighbor Steindór's, that way." He pointed west through the wall as though he were outdoors. "You're welcome to come along. If we leave this morning, we'll arrive—I'll guess tomorrow night. I have their spots. Do you see?"

He turned, pulled his shirt down, and showed the gray, sealish splotches that mottled his shoulder.

"Remarkable! I only descend from some Jón, unfortunately. Or so my mother told me. I won't be going along, however, thank you. I am heading—I am heading to—I am heading to the capital," she said with the vigor of someone who has just made up her mind. "You even have, somehow, the whiskers of a seal! Porridge would be lovely."

She went to the back of the house and did her ablutions. The recluse lent her a lump of rendered fat and ash to soap herself with, but he owned no mirror. She was not going to attempt a reorganization of her hair without a mirror to look at. She daubed her face with fresh powder.

"Finish up now," he called.

She called back, "I will, however, take a ride as far as the Thingvellir road, if you know it. I'm quite lost."

"That is a fine road," he said from within. "There's a lake on the way, warm enough to swim in where the hot spring bubbles it, and not the least bit haunted."

With the bicycle packed in straw in the dray, he mounted the horse. He offered a hand to help her up. She quavered, as though second-guessing, then took his hand and mounted, and they headed south.

She strove in vain to keep track of the compass points. Soon they were in badlands unlike any through which she had been traveling. Ferns grew around lurid ponds where the water was thick as paint. They began to ford a slough, the current of which rose to the horse's knees, then to its belly, so that Unnur had to fold her feet under her. "Where are we going?" she asked, hiding her alarm in impatience. "The other side," he said, pointing. The horse found a bar in the slough and took them upstream awhile, finally crossing a shallow current to a meadow, where it bowed to graze, but the recluse goaded it on. Silt sheeted the horse's flanks. "That draw hasn't made a current in fifty years," he said.

She held the recluse's ribs. A cloud bank approached, low and striated.

"It's so rough here!" she said. In fact, the road was no rougher there than anywhere else. She lodged her foot between the saddle fender and the horse's coat and gripped the recluse's ribs more tightly.

"No need to cinch me now, she won't buck," he said.

Unnur clasped him still harder.

He warbled like a loon.

All her muscles from neck to fingertips drew tight as a bow. She pivoted her foot against the saddle, heaved, and pitched the poor bastard off the horse.

He fell in the ashes. She grabbed at the reins. Her thieving hands shook with joy.

The horse bounced and whinnied. She pulled herself forward, fixed her feet in the stirrup irons, stood, and squeezed the animal between her knees, loosing the reins and hollering at the horse to giddap. It started to jog.

In the ashes, the recluse exclaimed, "Whoa there—my neck!"

The horse kept on, faster. Its ears swiveled backward in tandem like the heads of owls. Suddenly it pulled up short, its shoulders twisting.

She slapped its head.

From behind her, the recluse was calling, "Marta, dear."

Unnur kicked the horse with her heels, trilling, punched its neck, and stood up.

"Marta, love," he said, clicking his tongue at the horse.

Despite Unnur's efforts, the horse came about and trotted toward the place where its companion sat dazed in the ashes. She clawed at the animal; it only snorted.

He spoke to the horse in lullaby tones, beckoning with his long arms in the speckled sun. The horse bowed and sniffed him.

Unnur turned around and scurried over the horse's rump into the dray. She kicked the bicycle to the ground, leaped out herself, righted the bicycle, wobbled, pushed hard on the pedals, wobbled some more, and finally cruised ahead the distance of a few paces, at which point the tires spun beneath her and sank in the loose ash.

She fell off the bicycle; she stood up, making to run. Before she knew it, the recluse had her from behind by the hair.

"Let go," she cried. "You'll rip it!"

But the hair came right off its moorings. She turned around, slapping him and snatching at the waxy, pumpkin-colored thing he held in his fist with dumb infant appetite and desperation.

Her nape and temples screamed where the glue was torn. The horse just stood there.

"Give back my hair!" she demanded.

"Hallveig, I believe I've fallen down," he said, "will you help me?" But something was the matter with his senses and he collapsed, gripping the hair instinctively.

"Give it to me," she said, kicking his hands.

He said, "I don't understand."

"You're not old Gudmundur Jökulsön. Give it to me!"

"Of course not. I'm—"

"I knew it. You faker."

"My name is Örn. Was it Gudmundur you were looking for? He's been dead for ages. I could show you his house if you'll help me up."

Unnur spat but missed. "You're a liar and your clothes are falling apart. Who would want you?" she said.

"What is this?" he asked. "Did I tear part of you off? I'm sorry!"

She snatched the hair—in her fist it became a wig again, and it couldn't fool anybody into thinking she was pretty—and ran.

When the storm caught her, she was upright, stomping, shoulders square, looking for cover. She was on a ridge, perhaps a mile beyond the horse and the impostor.

The rain fell everywhere in swirling curtains. She found a cave. There was nothing anywhere to burn.

She slept. She awoke in the middle of the gray night, and the rain was still coming down. There was nothing anywhere to eat. She slept again and awoke again. The rain had stopped. She went to the mouth of the cave and looked down through the void of shadows into the valley, where the horse was still standing over the man, whoever he was.

If she went down there—but she mustn't go down there.

Yet if the gospels meant us to care for our enemies, no one better fit the category than the man who had tortured her hair. It was beyond use now. It was just a kind of skimpy rope. Across her scalp, the knotty patches where once the grease had burned her were bald and wet and cold.

Moss like a ragged awning dripped from the lip of the cave.

When she reached the impostor, he was a twisted bundle under an oilskin shroud of raincoat with a head pointing out at one end. "I thought you were better than us," she said. "I thought you were one of the hidden people and you could take care of yourself."

"You did?" he asked, raising his eyebrows.

His hair was like roots in the mud, and his face was white and sickly and smeared.

He said, "Did you put a spell on me, my dear?"

"And what if I did?" she said.

"Put me by the fire," he pleaded, "I need to get warm." But of course there was no fire. She rifled through his bags and found a piece of mutton sausage. It tasted as good as life.

He had not only gotten sick, or sicker, in the rain but had damaged his head when she had thrown him from the horse. A lump like a child's fist was growing under his scalp. She chewed. She took some of the meat out of her mouth as if to feed it to him, but caught herself in time and stuck it back in.

She sneered and swallowed.

In the bowl of the valley, she held the horse's reins, willing herself to get going and to whip the animal until it forgot him. But she only stood there a while. Quiet as thought. The man shivered in his sleep, stinking.

He awoke and asked for water and for her to lie down and warm him (he seemed to mistake the muck for a feather bed) and to be moved up on his side, but gentle—his head and neck: something was the matter—so he could relieve himself. Her stomach convulsed. She wanted to hit him in his rigid neck.

But she rolled him, slow, while he called to Jesus Christ and the spirits. She got down in the slop and put her hand under his sweltering head to keep it still while he coughed. His hair smelled like a rotted mattress. She soaked her skirt hem in water and washed his face.

The horse knew the way back to the farm. It was not the road to Reykjavík, so it was the wrong road. In the dray behind, Örn spoke only in tongues, or else spoke mumbled nonsense emphatically, to some object his eyes followed.

Her heart whammed away at her chest as though with hatred for its jailer,

and her fingers shook. Her clothes reeked of his clothes.

She tied him to a sled and pulled it through the door of his house. Soon it became clear that the entity with whom he had been trying to gibber was his dead wife. Once installed in his bed, he began to speak with her in clear Icelandic. Long discourses on subjects of former consequence. Grass and chimney stones. Private conjugal slang. Once, he said, "Here, I found your spoon."

He lay in a nest of quilts, sweat-sleek with his limbs drawn tight, like a trussed bird. His yellow-white hair stood erect. An odor came off him, sharp, of menthol and roses. He awoke and unfolded himself. He showed his sallow eyes and smiled.

"Lord, pardon the smell," he said.

"Sit up and we'll get you washed." She helped him take off his clothes.

"Every part of me is falling down," he said and laughed with the shamelessness of the dying, to whom modesty over a breast or a scrotum has become a rueful joke.

"Don't be vain," she said. She wrung a cloth and handed it to him.

"May I be vain of you?" he asked, dabbing himself.

"Nothing to be vain of here," she said.

"Why do you say such things?"

"Because I'm so ugly!" she cried.

His health began to turn around, even while life escaped him like an evaporating fluid. He went to the kitchen pump to wash on his own, but less of him remained to keep clean. All they had to eat was tripe and coffee. She had him stand at the open stove while she dried him off. His color had turned. He was like pinewood all over. He had never bathed so often. The smell persisted.

The equinox passed. The long dark was setting in. She found a knit green hat in the vanity drawer and wore it day and night. She found a book of sagas under the sink and brought him out to a chair in the home field at noon to get

some sun on him, and he listened to her read.

He came and went from his mind as freely as a barn cat.

While she cut his hair, he said, "It's about time, my dove. And where've you hidden my socks?" She took them off the rack above the stove, where

they were drying after she had washed them. The diminished lump floated on his head, black. Some of his hair came right off by its roots in her hand. Her face did not contort when she cried, but simply leaked.

He sniffed the socks and eyed her from under his wet bangs as she trimmed them. He said, "You know I don't mind that you're plain."

She lay in the upstairs at night watching the faceless vanity. "Hallveig," Örn called from below. "Won't you come down and be by me?"

"Listen to me," she said, "you are a delirious old man."

"But I love you," he said.

She had never heard these incredible words used aloud before—maybe in a radio play.

"I love everything about you," he said. "I even love the way your bottom hangs down in your skirts."

"Be quiet," she whispered.

"Do you remember when I brought the salmon to your sister's house?"

Over the bureau, a stuffed goose peered at her with hatred from the next world.

"That was your Birgitta," she said. "Shut up and leave me alone."

"So much roe in one fish. Where did you run off all this time?" he asked.

"I'm dead," she said.

"So they say. But do you really think you can fool me? I know every mole on your back."

It snowed.

With steadfast lurching steps, Örn came alive again as winter descended. He had teeth and toenails and a taste for coffee as a midnight snack. He was strange company, or rather it was strange to be accompanied and to be someone else's company; it would promise at first to make survival more pleasant, but before long it would make survival both less pleasant and less likely. She did not—she did not like—she did not like any of this.

Later, a rainstorm left the valley a lake of muck through which a yearling lamb came tottering into the home field and bleated tenderly at the house. It might as well have made a formal request to be assassinated.

Örn looked out the window and took down his gun and headed to the door.

"Don't you dare shoot that thing, it's lost," Unnur said from her stitching place in the dark by the stove, where she was mending the hem of his bedsheets, looking with her fingertip as winters before had taught her to do.

He broke open the breech and pushed a shell into each barrel with his shaking thumb.

"It's November," she said. "He isn't part of any crowd coming to overrun you. He's just lost from the summer. He—he must have been wandering since roundup. He's been alone out there for half his life."

"And thieving pasture the whole time," Örn said.

"Look at the poor lad—glowing," she said softly.

Örn stood old and small in the doorway, aiming the gun. It was lunchtime, the sun way under the horizon. He was so small and dear under his trimmed hair. The jug-handle profile of his exposed ears. For a moment, in spite of common sense, he was the recluse and her hidden man all spun together, and also the prince of mercy who came to her in dreams holding out a piece of chocolate.

The knots in the floorboards were faces rebuking her.

Hardly strong enough to break an egg, her convalescent—

But the smoke blew up all around him, the ghost light coming through it. The report shouted in the quiet house. He shot again. He staggered and cursed. She dropped her sewing and pushed him aside and ran out. The lamb was nowhere. Yet there was no place in miles for it to hide. Ravens screamed in crooked circuits over her head.

"Look at you," she said, turning back to the seducer in the doorway. "Risen from the tomb when there's something to kill, you are."

Everything was dun and drab in the wet meadow. The lamb had vaporized.

"Where did he go?" Örn asked.

"To the devil, that's where. He's a sending to show you where you're headed. You villain. You killer!"

"I missed, however," he said. The breech cracked open and cracked shut.

"Don't you laugh at me," she said. "I'll take the horse and you'll never see us again."

"My sweet girl. You went to hell and came back, didn't you? You're the sending. Here's the only place for someone like you. Come help me to bed, I'm tired. They'll tear you apart."

S

He came to him in fever visions. A girl and her collar. Yet the collar did not belong—my, but what a dream he'd been having these last months. The blue-black arctic-winter midday light came in around his girl from behind, hiding her face. Under the green woolen hat she always wore, the great, square, redoubtable head, the girl come home at last to whom the hat belonged. She must have been—

But no, she wasn't. How long was he going to stay in bed and hope? That girl was *all made up*. He had invented her so that she might bless him—as though blessings could be arranged for and did not come to us freely and continually through avalanches and accidents and typhus and blunders, double crosses, misidentifications, slanders, failings, killings of the wicked and the true.

In later years—after that winter of delusions and fevers that God had sent him in order to cook off the last toxic anticipations that Birgitta might simply climb out of the loft one morning and apologize for having briefly taken leave of him by dying—he would become a different man. Himself, only more so, and cleaner. He ordered proper clothes and laundered them monthly even in winter. Some rascal had stolen his mare and left a bicycle in exchange, but where was it written that a man his age could not learn to ride a bicycle?

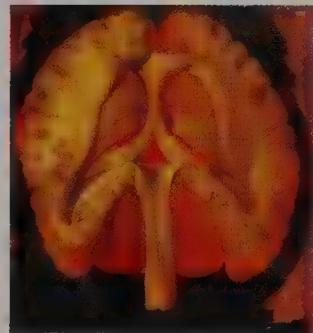
And what a figure he cut at round-up, gliding over the cinder road above a pair of wire orbits, a spruce and cheerful fellow who called everyone "my dear"—"my dear boy," "my dear woman," "my dear old friend"—but who possessed no one of his own, and was possessed by no one. Like a general before an army of saintly clowns, he coasted down the slope to town with all his sheep hustling behind, to the long, unassuming concrete shelter under a blue tin roof, where they would be sheared and slaughtered. ■

NEW BOOKS

By Jane Smiley

Ashok Rajamani would like to show you what happens when 100 billion neurons are suddenly overwhelmed by bursting blood vessels. In June 2000, at the age of twenty-five, Rajamani is passing the time in preparation for his brother's wedding masturbating in his Manhattan hotel room while the rest of his family is out sightseeing. Unbeknownst to anyone, Rajamani suffers a congenital defect in the way arteries and veins in his brain are connected—an arteriovenous malformation—which leads to what he calls a “Hiroshima” hemorrhage the moment he climaxes. (“Those rumors about jerking off were right,” he remembers thinking before he passed out.) The AVM hemorrhage was, according to his doctor, bound to happen sometime, but in his good-humored and self-deprecating memoir, **THE DAY MY BRAIN EXPLODED** (Algonquin, \$13.95, algonquin.com), Rajamani persists in feeling culpable—for being blinded by God, for ruining his brother's wedding, and for switching jobs without signing the COBRA form that would have extended his health insurance. The months, then years, following the hemorrhage are

Jane Smiley is the author of many works of fiction and non-fiction. Her most recent novels are, for adults, *Private Life*, and, for young adults, *Pie in the Sky*. She won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1992 and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1997.



a chaos of change, misunderstanding, adaptation, and revelation. Bacterial meningitis, hallucinations, a ventriculostomy, a craniotomy, and a plummeting white-blood-cell count, as well as a savior complex, follow. (“I’m the body of love, I’m the body of love,” Rajamani babbles to his family for weeks on end.)

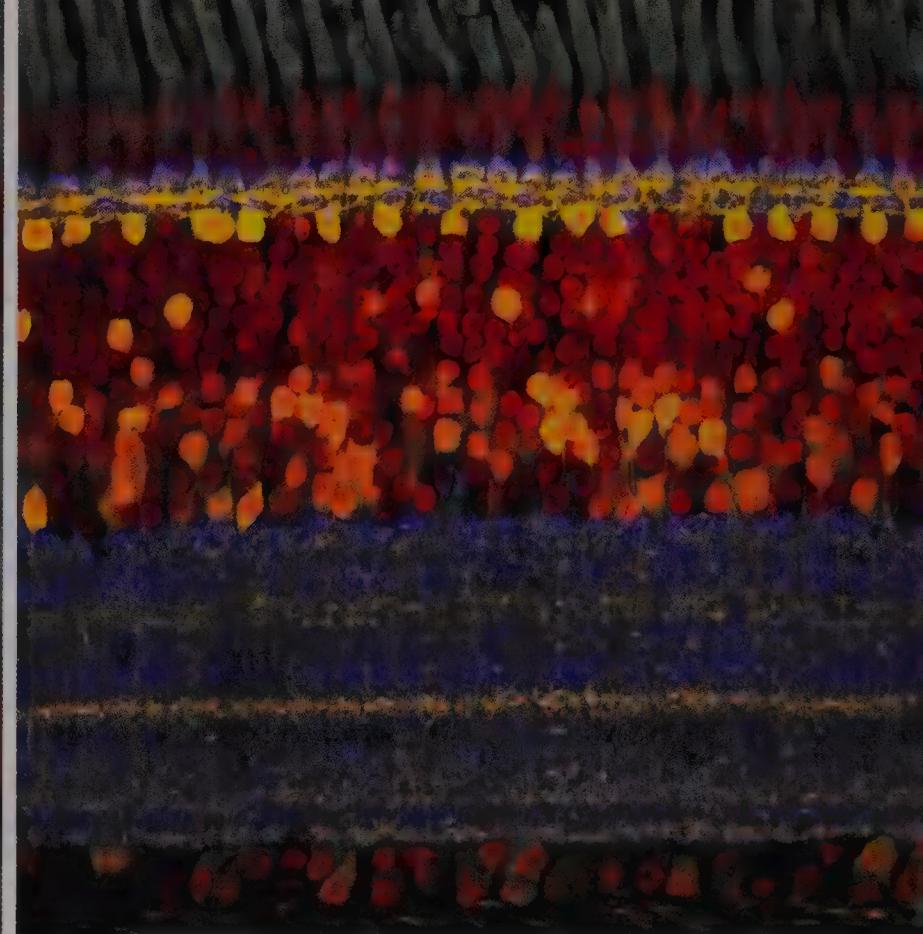
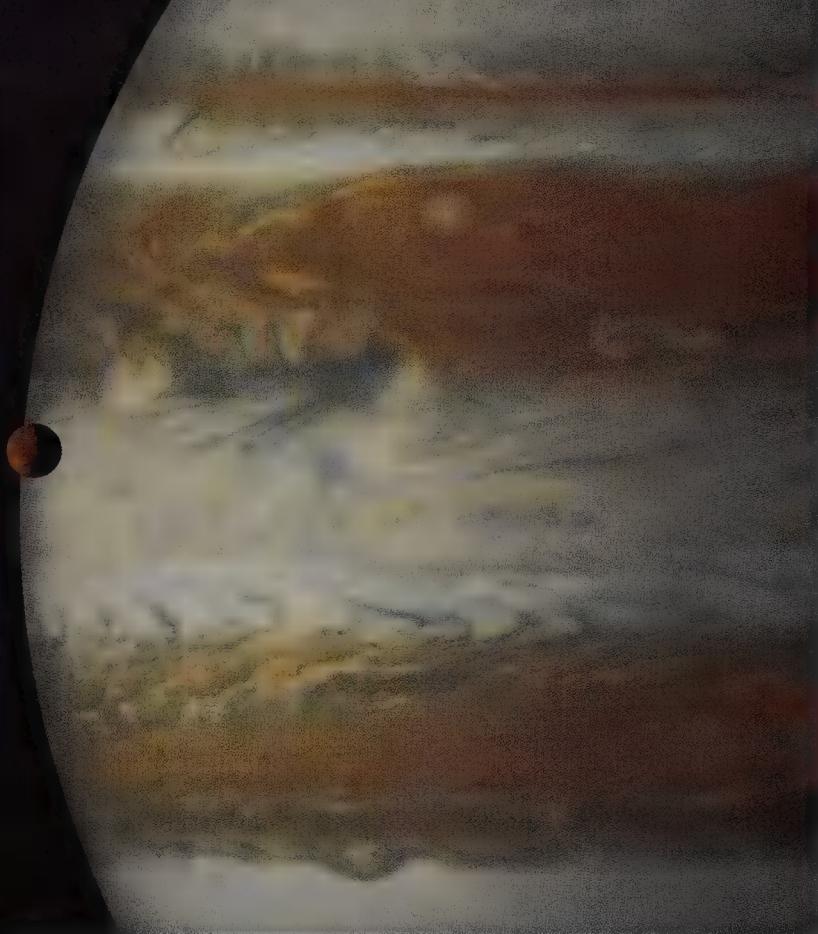
His recovery takes him to religion—Christ, Krishna, Kali—and to the offices of speech, physical, occupational, and cognitive therapists. *The Day My Brain Exploded* chronicles his return, not to his normal life (a life in which he had been bullied for

being “brainy” before becoming a public-relations whiz and inveterate alcoholic), but to what he calls “a brand new life.” His brain is deceitful, fooling him time after time into thinking that everything has stabilized—even as he suffers seizures and migraines, short-term and emotional memory loss. When, after several years, he starts seeing the people around him, as well as his own reflection, as figures so distorted he can’t bear to look at them, no epileptologist or psychiatrist can cure him; hiding out at home, he comes up with his own diagnosis by means of the Internet—Alice in Wonderland syndrome, also known as lilli-



putian hallucinations. The doctors pooh-pooh it, but Alice’s adventures help him to decipher his warped visions. Rajamani’s book deals with his drama elegantly, by maintaining a calm tone, and though he initially thinks of himself as a “science class earthworm”—regenerated, but with only a portion of his old self intact—he eventually derives pride from his altered state. “I loved that old guy profoundly,” he sighs. “But I think I love this new fucker just as much. Perhaps even more.”

“**T**It only takes a solitary, single, massive explosion to create a completely new universe,” Rajamani tells us; **PHYSICS IN MIND: A QUANTUM VIEW OF THE BRAIN** (Basic Books, \$28.99, basicbooks.com) by Werner R. Loewenstein, an emeritus professor of biophysics at Columbia, explores our universe’s alpha explosion, the Big Bang. Loewenstein begins by relabeling the mysterious quantum unit sometimes called energy and sometimes called matter as “information,” explaining that the moment before the Big Bang was the “moment when the information of the universe was concentrated in a minuscule



speck—all the information there was and ever would be.” A moment later, the explosion, and after that, entropy—then the condensation of information into smaller and smaller structures (galaxies, stars, planets, brains). The job of an organism 13 billion years on, according to Loewenstein, is to organize the available information in a way that preserves its ephemeral being for as long as possible.

But “the mind is frontier territory,” he writes, “lying uneasily at the border of science and philosophy,” and so this absorbing account brings in, along with many scientists, Immanuel Kant and John Updike, Philip Roth and Lewis Carroll. If Rajamani’s reality was upended by his syndrome, the reader’s will be upended by Loewenstein’s picture of what integrates the nature of the universe with the nature of the organ that senses and strives to understand it. Though Loewenstein occasionally errs with jokey hat tips to “Lady Evolution” (“I don’t know who audits her accounts, but whoever does, needs no red ink”), his book is vital and wide-ranging, exploring everything from the structure of time to the phenomenon of gut feelings, the color of white and the reach of our senses, and why we’ve adapted to notice the anomaly rather than the norm. Included are discourses on retrieving a lost dimension, the language of math-

ematics (unlike Alice’s world, “stringently coded, logically self-consistent, and capable of apprehending the reciprocal relationships between things”), and the persistent enigma of consciousness. Loewenstein’s conception of the brain in terms of quantum physics gives us a way to understand its capacity to process “truly astronomical amounts of information”; what we end up with is an image of the mind as a computational machine.

Loewenstein describes a recent experiment in which scientists monitored the electrical activity of cells in the brain while subjects were shown pictures of various animals, people, and buildings:

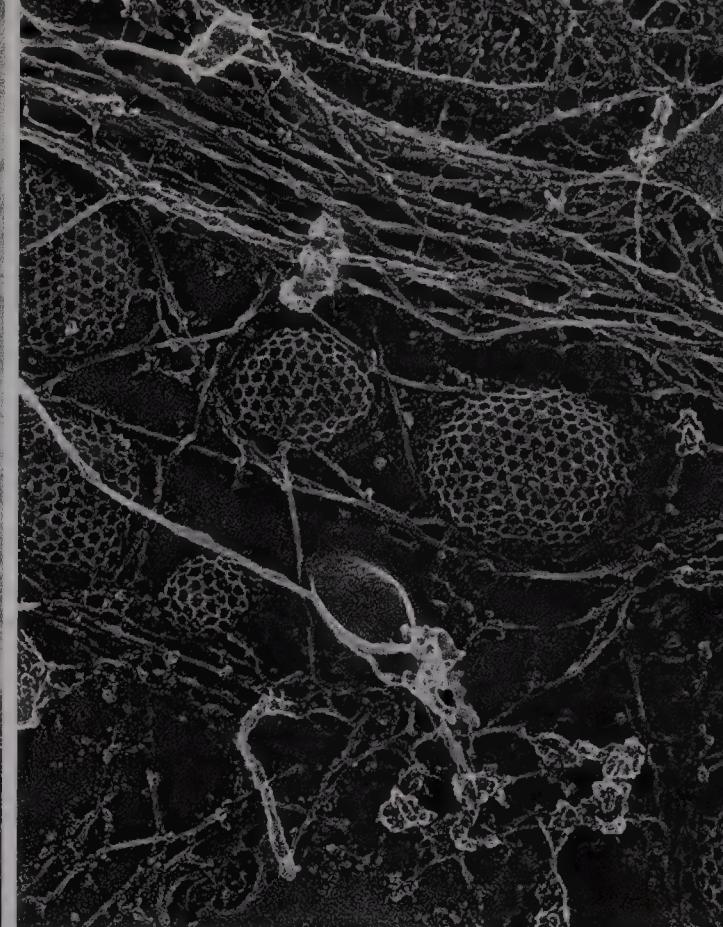
The results could hardly have been more dramatic: one cell, for instance, would specifically respond to the image of President Bill Clinton; it fired off volleys of electrical pulses when the subject was shown a photograph of Clinton, but not when photographs of other U.S. Presidents, famous athletes, or unknown persons were shown.

These cells reappear in Sebastian Seung’s **CONNECTOME: HOW THE BRAIN’S WIRING MAKES US WHO WE ARE** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$27, hmhco.com)—though Seung’s are more partial to firing for Jennifer

Aniston and Halle Berry than for the forty-second president. (“The neuron is my second-favorite cell,” writes Seung. “It’s a close runner-up to my favorite: sperm.”) Like *Physics in Mind*, Seung’s book impresses the reader with the gangly complexity of our brains, whose networks are “something like the flight maps we see in the back pages of airline magazines.” Our unique structure of cell interaction he calls a “connectome” (modeled after “genome”), and if Loewenstein wants to show how these networks came to be, Seung, a generation younger and a professor of computational neuroscience at MIT, is more concerned with what we might do with them in the future. He looks at phantom limbs, phrenology, syphilis, schizophrenia, the wild boy of Aveyron, and a psychologist named George Stratton who in 1897 spent eight days with inverting lenses strapped to his head, seeing the world upside-down and reversed, to show that his brain could adjust to it.

Seung locates consciousness not in the anatomy of individual neurons but in the architecture of their connections—and for him, the diagnostic is how death is defined, a definition that has shifted in the past generation owing to medical technologies that preserve respiration and circulation even after the brain has become

The transit of Io in front of Jupiter, from *Planetfall: New Solar System Visions*, by Michael Benson, published this year by Abrams. Courtesy NASA/JPL/Michael Benson, Kinetikon Pictures. The neural circuitry in the retina of a baby chick that transforms light into signals the brain can understand; photograph by Andy Fischer. From *Portraits of the Mind: Visualizing the Brain from Antiquity to the 21st Century*, by Carl Schoonover, published in 2010 by Abrams



"discolored, soft, or partially liquified." If a brain ceases to function, Seung asks, are its memories and predilections still present in its structure, waiting to be reanimated by some future process? To answer that question, he examines brain pickling and corpse freezing, plastination and cryogenics, and almost convinces by being convinced. He's generally buoyant about technological progress, calling the iPhone a modern marvel on par with the Miracle of the Sun in Fátima and claiming that it's "no exaggeration to compare uploading with ascension to heaven." Standing by the dubious notion that everything possible is also inevitable, he urges us to alter ourselves, or our brains, with the four r's—reweighting, reconnection, rewiring, and regeneration. "Personal change—educating yourself, drinking less, saving your marriage," he writes in the introduction, "is about changing your connectome." For what you can't change, he offers an old rhyme:

For every ailment under the sun
There is a remedy, or there is none;
If there be one, try to find it;
If there be none, never mind it.

So, essentially, goes the conclusion of Aaron James's **ASSHOLES: A THEORY** (Doubleday, \$23.95, doubleday.com), which

deals with a problem neuroscientists cannot solve. James is a philosophy professor at the University of California, Irvine, and also a surfer, dual vocations that have prompted many discussions about newcomers who aggressively horn in, endanger others, lack remorse, and resist any sort of correction. James neatly does what philosophers must do: he defines his terms, organizes and codifies, declares his own loyalties; he locates himself on the spectrum of assholery and suggests origins both psychological and sociological. The result is a delightful combination of the demotic and the technical: "It remains an open question whether the person at issue *really* is an asshole, whether he is best classified as that type of person. Perhaps he is better classified as a jerk, a schmuck, or douche bag, or just someone who is insensitive to social cues."

James is simultaneously putting us on with a bit of "tomfoolery" and being perfectly serious. He specifies the damage that assholes do (to our status in groups and our right to be acknowledged). He speculates on historical and modern asshole typology, calling out Noel Gallagher, of the rock band Oasis (a "boorish asshole"), before moving on to Gustave Flaubert and Bernard-Henri Lévy ("For smugness ... there is of course no

place like France"). He discusses political assholery, comparing and contrasting George W. Bush, Newt Gingrich, and Silvio Berlusconi ("our paradigmatic asshole of public life"). And he is ideologically evenhanded, considering Dick Cheney but also Ralph Nader and John Edwards. No women, however, seem to qualify—a puzzle James addresses by setting aside the conundrum of Ann Coulter and exploring the difference between bitches and assholes.

"Assholes, then, are made and not born," he concludes. "They are made by a society's gender culture. A newborn boy in the United States or Italy or Israel is much more likely to live the life of an asshole than a newborn boy in Japan or Norway or Canada." Asshole management, we come to see, is a pressing concern for us—more so than for those fortunate Norwegians. And so, after rows between philosophers (subchapters such as "Hobbes Beats Marx" and "Rousseau Beats Hobbes"), James gives us some practical advice for confronting assholes, for maintaining self-respect and social position in a world full of them. And he ends, in a letter to the asshole, with some tips for giving up the asshole life: "My Friend," it begins, "I write hoping to persuade you to change your basic way of being." ■

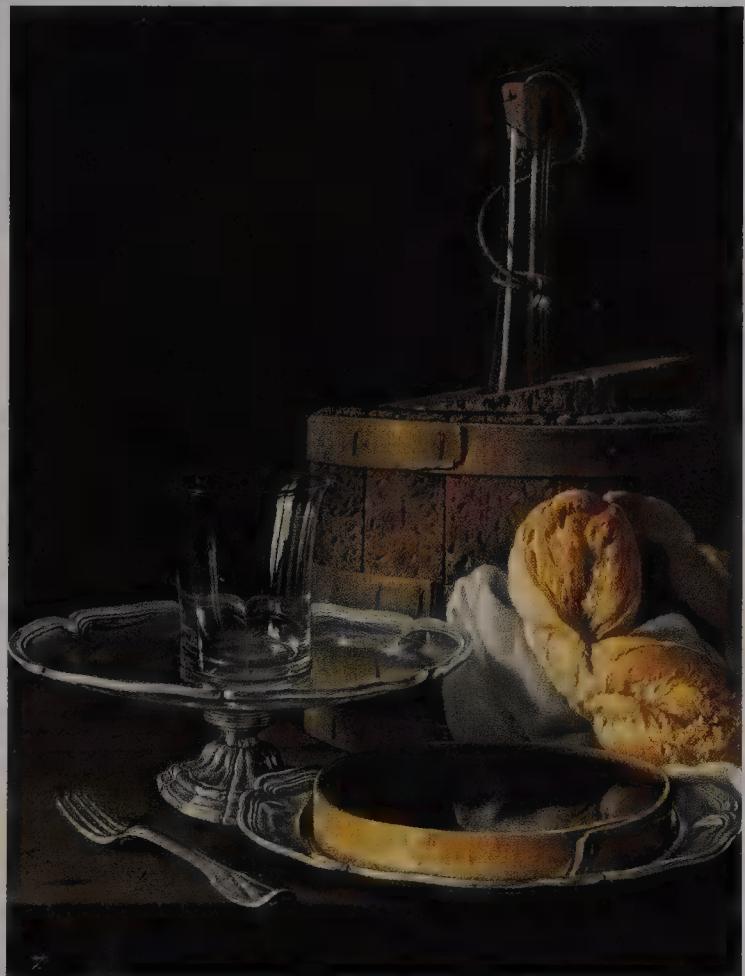
THE TINES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

A history of table technology

By Steven Shapin

Discussed in this essay:

Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat, by Bee Wilson. Basic Books. 352 pages. \$26.99. basicbooks.com.



The fork is worth considering. It's considered a billion times a day as a tool for delivering food to face. Some of that considering flows from practical uncertainties about how to use the thing. If you're British or European, you grip the fork in your left hand, index finger on the back and convex surface upwards. You then secure a piece of meat on the tines as you cut with the knife held in your right hand. You can stabilize the cut-up meat with some smooshed vegetables at the Steven Shapin teaches history of science at Harvard.

cause of much anxiety, and the only certainty is that they're a fork affair. You don't line them up on your knife or spear them one by one on the tip, though the temptation to do so comes from the fact that the fork isn't well suited to dealing with peas.)

Although some sorts of forks were around in antiquity and the Middle Ages—think of Neptune's trident or the peasant's pitchfork—the fork as a standard table implement was unknown in western Europe until it appeared in Italian court circles, probably between the eleventh and fourteenth

centuries. Into the early seventeenth century, its use struck English tourists as remarkable. In 1611, the eccentric foot traveler Thomas Coryat picked out fork use as an admirable and peculiarly Italian custom—a marvelous advance on the promiscuous placing of dirty fingers in the communal meat bowl—and he encouraged it when he returned to England, where it was widely regarded as just the sort of fussiness that foreigners went in for. In Jonathan Swift's 1738 skit "Polite Conversation," fork use was condemned as effete and unnatural: "Fingers were made before forks, and hands before knives." The number of tines changed over time—from two to three to four—but the fork remained a problem utensil into the early twentieth century: in 1905, H. G. Wells dramatized the tension attending English social mobility through a parvenu's fork anxiety at a posh London hotel, where a fork in the protagonist's untrained hand was "an instrument of chase rather than capture."

The artificiality of the table fork was just the point: you didn't need a fork for purely practical reasons the way you might need the spoon and the knife. (As shown by the occasional invention of hybrid implements advertised as functionally superior—the spork, the sporf, the spife, the knork, the runcible spoon.) The fork is a bit of table technology that makes manifest a changing moral order. Cutlery has a special advantage in doing so, since feeding happens, if you're lucky, several times a day, and, if you're sociable, in the presence of other people. The table is an intimate site; it's where you find out about others and they find out about you. Here is the point of the pea problem: feeding isn't only a matter of the more or less practical; it's also about the more or less proper—*how things are rightly done in our sort of society, by our sort of people*. In 1848, Thackeray's *Book of Snobs* used that disgusting pea practice as a paradigm: "Society having ordained certain customs, men are bound to obey the law of society, and conform to its harmless orders." If I were to eat peas with my knife, I would be "insulting society" just as much as if I were to go to a tea party in a dressing gown and slippers. Homer Simpson eats his peas with a knife, and that says it all.

Cutlery, then, offers rich potential for getting things wrong. The “harmless orders” of table technique involve not just the use of the fork but knowing which fork, which spoon, knife, and glass pertain to which purpose. During periods of rapid social mobility in Georgian and Victorian England, special-purpose silverware proliferated: grapefruit, coffee, tea, mayonnaise, mustard, salt, egg, and ice-cream spoons; marrow and Stilton scoops; butter and olive picks; fish knives, slices, and forks; oyster, pickle, and cake forks; tongs for sugar, sardines, and asparagus; grape shears; cake and pea servers. The pleasure of witnessing faux pas was probably among the highlights of a well-supplied Victorian or Edwardian dinner party.

Table manners are an approved form of hypocrisy: they sustain the pretense that something benign is happening when, from another point of view, what's going on is pretty bloody. In the 1930s, the great German historical sociologist Norbert Elias wrote about what he called the “civilizing process” through which both the modern world and the modern self were brought into being. The civilized self, in Elias's view, kept the body under control, managed or denied human carnality—and the hero of this story was the fork, which allowed its user to display a certain distance from the violence of food preparation and consumption. You didn't seize your meat with your fingers or stab it with your knife. A book of manners published in the late seventeenth century prescribed both proper fork use and the state of mind in which the instrument should be employed: “You must not by any awkward gesture show any signs that you are hungry, nor fix your Eyes upon the meat, as if you would devour all . . . and be sure you touch nothing but with your Fork.” William Burroughs wrote of “the naked lunch” as that “frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork,” but it was the fork that helped you not see the dead flesh for what it was.

As fork use increased, so the table knife changed shape. The tip was once pointed, the cutting edge sharp: it was the sort of thing you could use, if you wanted, to kill. In came the fork, and the tip of the table knife became rounded and the cutting edge could scarcely cut. These days, you'd be hard put to injure someone seriously with common

cutlery, and the more substantial weapons used to carve the celebratory turkey or suckling pig are invariably handed to the senior male and then put safely away once the beast has been dismembered. The only table implement now really well adapted to separating muscle into bite-size bits is the steak knife, a reminder of the table knife's former glory.

Bee Wilson's delightful *Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat* does talk about the fork, but that's just one part of her ebulliently written and unobtrusively learned survey of the tools we have used to prepare, preserve, and consume our food. She recognizes that there is something counterintuitive in thinking of forks, pots, pans, and stoves as technologies at all. The historian David Edgerton recently wrote about “the shock of the old,” the technologies we forgot to remember because they were new so long ago and are now so taken for granted. We're accustomed to thinking of artifacts as technology insofar as they are “high”—electronic, digital, and, of course, very new—but few technologies have been as transformative and are as pervasive as those in our kitchens and on our dinner tables.

An apparent distinction here is between the utilitarian and the expressive aspects of kitchen and table technologies, though you come away from Wilson's story wondering whether any of these technologies are, or ever have been, purely practical. Consider that odd Georgian invention, the sterling-silver fish knife. Wilson observes that silver implements for dealing with fish provided two advantages to those who could afford them: unlike steel, silver did not react chemically with the lemon juice that invariably accompanied fish on English tables (a reaction that made the fish taste bad), and a fish knife's scalloped shape was possibly a way of distinguishing it from ordinary knives in the cutlery drawer. Metallurgical properties constituted a pragmatic justification for the silver fish knife, but the fact that it was silver also displayed social distinction. Yet prejudice against fish knives developed and persisted among the nineteenth-century British aristocracy. The authentically posh didn't use fish knives but instead maneuvered the flesh off the bone and onto the plate by the

deft use of two forks. The silver fish knife was an implement that seemed posh—ornate, dainty, and precious—but that, like a preference for the word “serviette” over “napkin,” missed its mark. (To put it in terms of BBC comedies, Hyacinth Bucket would almost certainly own fish knives, while Audrey fforbes-Hamilton would not.) Since fish knives were a recent innovation, their possession betrayed the fact that you hadn't inherited your silver but bought it. So the fish knife was both an aspirational symbol and a target for those who wanted to ridicule clumsy gestures toward social climbing, as John Betjeman did in his brutal poem “How to Get On in Society”: “Phone for the fish knives, Norman/ As Cook is a little unnerved;/ You kiddies have crumpled the serviettes/ And I must have things daintily served.”

Wilson devotes one substantial chapter to fire, the energy source that, until the advent of the electric range and the microwave, cooked your food. As she writes:

In the modern kitchen, fire has not just been tamed. It has been so boxed off, you could forget it existed at all, amid the cool work-tops and all the on-off switches that enable us to summon heat and dismiss it again in a second.

That ability originated in a series of nineteenth-century inventions, starting with Count Rumford's very large brick stove (which never really took off) and getting a serious grip on the middle-class market with the development of cast-iron “kitcheners” in the middle of the century. First they were fired by coal or wood, providing safer and cleaner sources of heat; later, gas-fired cookstoves made safety and cleanliness matters of course.

The kitchen had historically been an unsafe and unpleasant place, with heat management as the major cause of its nastiness. An open hearth meant that cooks got seriously burned; unintended children often got killed. You had to be extremely careful about your hair and your clothing, so women, of course, were at greatest risk. The kitchen was by far the most dangerous room in the home, so dangerous that in medieval great houses, kitchens were often constructed as separate buildings, connected to the house proper by covered passages.

Different modes of managing fire required different skills. In 1825, the gourmand Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote that cooking may be taught, “but a man who can roast is born with the faculty.” Modern readers won’t have the slightest idea what he was talking about—why ever should roasters be born rather than made?—and that’s because roasting is now practically synonymous with baking, both operations being carried out in dry heat in an enclosed oven. Set the thermostat to 350°F, throw in the meat, baste occasionally, and wait for the digital thermometer to ping. But a roast originally involved rotation: you had to keep the meat turning and carefully manage its distance from the open flame. That’s very difficult work: get it wrong and the precious roast is burned or tough or raw at the center. Although the overall control of the operation was usually in the hands of a master roaster, the constant rotation of the spit was the work of a now disappeared kitchen role, that of the “turnspit” or “turnbroach.” Turnspits in medieval England were typically boys, sometimes as young as five, and when, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, tender consciences began to bridle at the use of children, specially bred dogs were imprisoned in large wheels fixed on a wall near the fireplace and connected to the spit by a pulley. Dog wheels, Wilson notes, were a feature of American restaurants into the nineteenth century. Animal-rights campaigners targeted the practice, but when one of them visited kitchens to check for dog wheels, “he several times found that the dogs had been replaced at the fire by young black children.” By the mid-eighteenth century, however, mechanization was doing much to replace animate turnspits, and Wilson estimates that about half of English homes—and not just the great houses—then possessed a technology that few now will even have heard of: a mechanical jack.

Direct-fire cooking had many disagreeable features, but the hearth historically played a social role that no Maytag or Viking can fill. The hearth was literally the focus of household life: it warmed, it lighted, it nurtured. (Focus is, after all, the Latin word for “fireplace.”) The tasks of attending to the fire—starting it, fueling it, tamping it down for the night—were, Wilson

writes, “the dominant domestic activities until 150 years ago, with the coming of gas ovens.” (She reminds us that “curfew” once referred not to a time when people must be off the street but to a piece of kitchen technology, “a large metal cover placed over the embers at night to contain the fire.”)

In her later discussion of modern technologies of cooling, Wilson speculates that the refrigerator, avidly adopted by many Americans in the first third of the twentieth century, eventually became “a new focal point for the kitchen, taking over from the old hearth. Once, we congregated around fire,” she writes; “now people organize their lives around the hard, chilly lines of the refrigerator.” Previously, if you wanted to preserve food you relied on salting, drying, or smoking. The domestic refrigerator was a transformative technology, the final repository for fresh or frozen foods that traveled to it long distances along artificially cooled channels. But families don’t congregate around the fridge the way they once did around the hearth, the glowing dial of the radio, or the flickering television. Instead, much of the fridge’s organizing significance is visible on its exterior surfaces: fridge doors are where family members stick postcards from friends holidaying in Tuscany, where they display tidbits of local news and keep track of who in the household is in and who is out, which provisions need to be got in, and whether a poem can be created from a scrambled set of magnetized word chips. The fridge door has emerged as a virtual gathering place. Your family might not congregate there, but you know that everyone will pass by and take notice.

The domestic fridge is now fewer than a hundred years old, but the modern kitchen is a palimpsest of old and new technologies. My own kitchen contains a rustic mortar and pestle made in Central America from volcanic rock; rust-prone carbon-steel knives bought from E. Dehillerin in Paris; several Japanese high-chromium forged-stainless-steel knives; a Chinese chef’s knife (or *tou*) and an iron wok; an Italian *mezzaluna* (which I rarely use, though its herb-chopping virtues are rightly celebrated by Wilson); and, of course, a Cuisinart (which I use a lot). Both my mother and my

grandmother cooked with cast-iron pots and skillets made since the 1890s by a company in the Appalachians. I was a fool not to have made off with some of their cookware, because the heat conduction and retention of cast iron is superb, and after long seasoning it’s practically nonstick.

Then there are the cookbooks, whose recipes have changed radically over time. An early modern recipe might, for example, instruct the cook to take several chickens “about the bigness of a Partridge” and “boyl them till they be half boyled enough,” but now we need to know exactly how much the chickens should weigh and exactly how long they should be cooked. The premodern cook was presumed to know all this in a rough-and-ready, good-enough-to-be-getting-on-with form; the modern cook wants it all specified and, ideally, demonstrated on television or YouTube. Indeed, when the modern recipe directs the cook to “season to taste,” it takes for granted—perhaps wrongly—that the cook knows how the dish is supposed to taste. Such assumptions are the occasion for Wilson’s bafflement at American cookbooks’ use of the “cup” measure, originating with Boston’s Fannie Farmer in the late nineteenth century and since then distinguishing American volumetrics from normal practice elsewhere. What in the world is a cup, even carefully leveled as Farmer firmly insisted it must be? It wasn’t just a matter of which cup you used, as that could be, and eventually was, standardized; the enduring problem is that any measure of volume is an unreliable guide to the amount of stuff contained in that volume. A cup of flour, Wilson notes, can vary from four to six ounces, depending, for example, on whether and how the flour has been sifted.

When, in the early 1970s, I moved into a tenement flat in Edinburgh, it had a tiny room called a scullery. In much of Britain the scullery was a space for washing dishes or clothes, but in the north of England and in Scotland the word often designated a kitchen. Mine, scarcely big enough for one person, contained only a small stove. I was puzzled and a bit irritated by this arrangement, but Scottish friends explained that the preparation of food was traditionally

considered an unclean activity, best carried out in private. The scullery represented kitchen Calvinism.

That division of domestic space didn't survive gentrification, and the scullery underwent a conversion—in my flat, into the place where the fridge sat, and, in others', into a small loo, a space whose privacy was taken as a matter of course. The stove was brought out into the dining room, which then became known as the kitchen. This shifting about of bourgeois space happened in much of the Anglo-American world in the second half of the twentieth century. Food preparation came out of the closet: what was private became sociable, what was dirty and unpleasant became delightful, and what had been done by servants was now presided over by the mistress of the house—and, increasingly, by the master. Changing technology had a lot to do with that, creating the physical conditions under which cooking could be transformed from drudgery to pleasure and offering new means of displaying social distinction: the smooth granite work surfaces, the grill and professional-grade extractor hood, the gleaming AGA range, the espresso machine, the celebrity-authored cookbooks with sumptuous shallow-focus photography, the cohabitation of the technologically avant-garde and the nostalgically artisanal.

New technology has not released food preparation and consumption from its expressive role; it has just changed the ways in which we say who we are and what we value. Indeed, though many aspects of food preparation have become vastly less time-consuming and onerous than they once were, some of us now spend far more time in food preparation than is strictly necessary for fueling our bodies. Seeking to recover "the tastes we have lost," we aim to recover the modes of work that produced those tastes—the lost arts of baking, butchery, sausage-making, preserving, and even, in Wilson's case, roasting using a mechanical jack in front of an open fire. Our kitchens highlight the modern tensions between labor and leisure, between the technologies of efficiency and those of authenticity, between modern food preparation as a way of freeing up time for important things and as itself the ultimately important thing.

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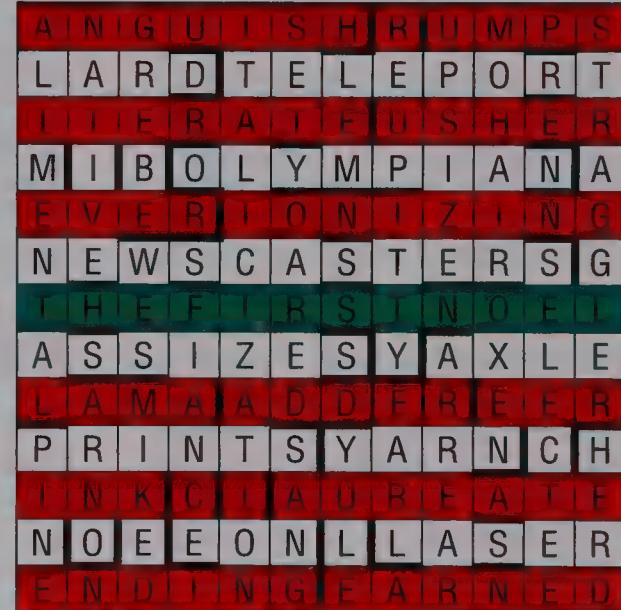
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SOLUTION TO THE DECEMBER PUZZLE

NOTES FOR "SEASON'S GREETINGS":

Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov.
Note: * indicates an anagram.

The entry at 23A, THE FIRST NOEL, is a direction to remove the first L from each Across answer in a red row.



ACROSS: 1. languish*; 7. lumps*; 10. C(L)ard; 11. *; 13. l(iterat*)e; 14. lush*-(d)er(rev.); 15. *; 16. lever, rev.; 17. L(1-on)1(rev.)-zing; 20. *; 26. homophone; 27. a[Xmas]le; 28. llam-a, rev.; 31. lad-de(E); 33. leer, rev.; 34. homophone; 36. (chimney)-y-a-(ibbo)n; 38. l(etter)-in-K(ringleland); 40. hidden; 41. la(s[kyl])er*; 42. (b)lending; 43. lea(r)n(ed)*.

DOWN: 1. (Sant)a-l-1-mental*; 2. (1-Magi)native; 3. E-berg, rev.; 4. it-it-Liza-a-coin*; 5. two mnigs.; 6. *; 7. (c)upsize; 8. hidden in reverse; 9. St.-ra(GG-£)er*; 12. L(evantine)-E-M(agi); 18. *; 19. initials; 21. hidden; 22. s(el-ect*)ee; 24. fi(N[ativity])ance; 25. (b)ox-en; 27. (st)ar-rear; 29. (me)nora(h)*; 30. first letters; 32. (y)ear-l(ose); 34. (o)pine; 35. *; 36. homophone; 37. homophone.

But that story about the “some of us” who “love to cook” captures only one mode of modernity and only one modern iteration of the kitchen. There are other scenes, and these are absent from Wilson’s engrossing book, though they’re almost certainly a lot more common than her absorbing AGA saga. One scene is, of course, the kitchens of the poor and struggling; another is the kitchens of middle-class people unenchanted by food and its preparation. What’s a pleasure for Wilson and me is a pain in the ass for a lot of people. In the past few years, fiftieth-anniversary editions of two of America’s most popular cookbooks appeared. One—you’ve guessed it—was *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, by Julia Child, whose *batterie de cuisine* is now a foodie shrine in the Smithsonian. The other—which I bet you haven’t guessed—is *The I Hate to Cook Book*, by Peg Bracken, whose pots and pans are now presumably in a landfill. More than 3 million copies of *I Hate* were sold, and, after the book had been out of print for some years, the rights were eagerly snapped up by publishers who reckoned it was “in sync with lifestyles today” and that there were millions of home cooks still yearning to whip up something quick and tasty with a packet of onion-soup mix, some canned peas, and that indispensable tin of cream-of-mushroom soup without using any piece of kitchenware more exotic than a Jell-O mold. The middle classes, too, know their way very well in and out of the microwave; they are a profitable market for Whole Foods’s ready-made Harvest Squash Soup and Marks & Spencer’s heat-and-serve chicken Kiev; they eat out a lot; they often eat alone; and with many of them, the made-from-scratch meal for the whole family is an endangered species. Just as the kitchen has become a more social space, so the dining room has fallen into relative disuse.

We talk a lot about food, but much of it is just talk: our kitchens may be well appointed, but the equipment, like the cookbooks—and a bit like the fish knife—is often for show. Bee Wilson speaks to some of us, Peg Bracken to others. Wilson’s people sit around in their kitchens, trading stories about *sous vide* machines and immersion blenders. Bracken’s people are just as contemporary but have different pri-

orities: “If anyone gives you a shiny new cooking utensil for Christmas, you’re as thrilled as a janitor with a new bucket of cleaning solvent,” she writes. “The less attention paid to your cooking

equipment, the better.” And the less said about it, the better: “Your cooking is a personal thing, like your sex life, and it shouldn’t be the subject of general conversation.” ■

THE CHAMELEON

Thornton Wilder’s multifaceted life and work

By Michael Dirda

Discussed in this essay:

Thornton Wilder: A Life, by Penelope Niven. HarperCollins. 848 pages. \$39.99. harpercollins.com.

Thornton Wilder: Collected Plays and Writings on Theater, edited by J. D. McClatchy. The Library of America. 888 pages. \$40. loa.org.

Thornton Wilder: The Bridge of San Luis Rey and Other Novels 1926–1948, edited by J. D. McClatchy. The Library of America. 731 pages. \$35. loa.org.

Thornton Wilder: The Eighth Day, Theophilus North, Autobiographical Writings, edited by J. D. McClatchy. The Library of America. 864 pages. \$35. loa.org.

Poor Thornton Wilder! He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize three times, produced not one but two high school classics—the short novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927) and the play *Our Town* (1938)—and essentially wrote the book for the phenomenally popular Broadway musical *Hello, Dolly!* Most of his seven novels became best-sellers, as well as selections of the Book of the Month Club. Throughout his career, Wilder served as U.S. literary ambassador to the world, going on goodwill missions to South America, attending conferences in Europe, and appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine with the American flag in the background.

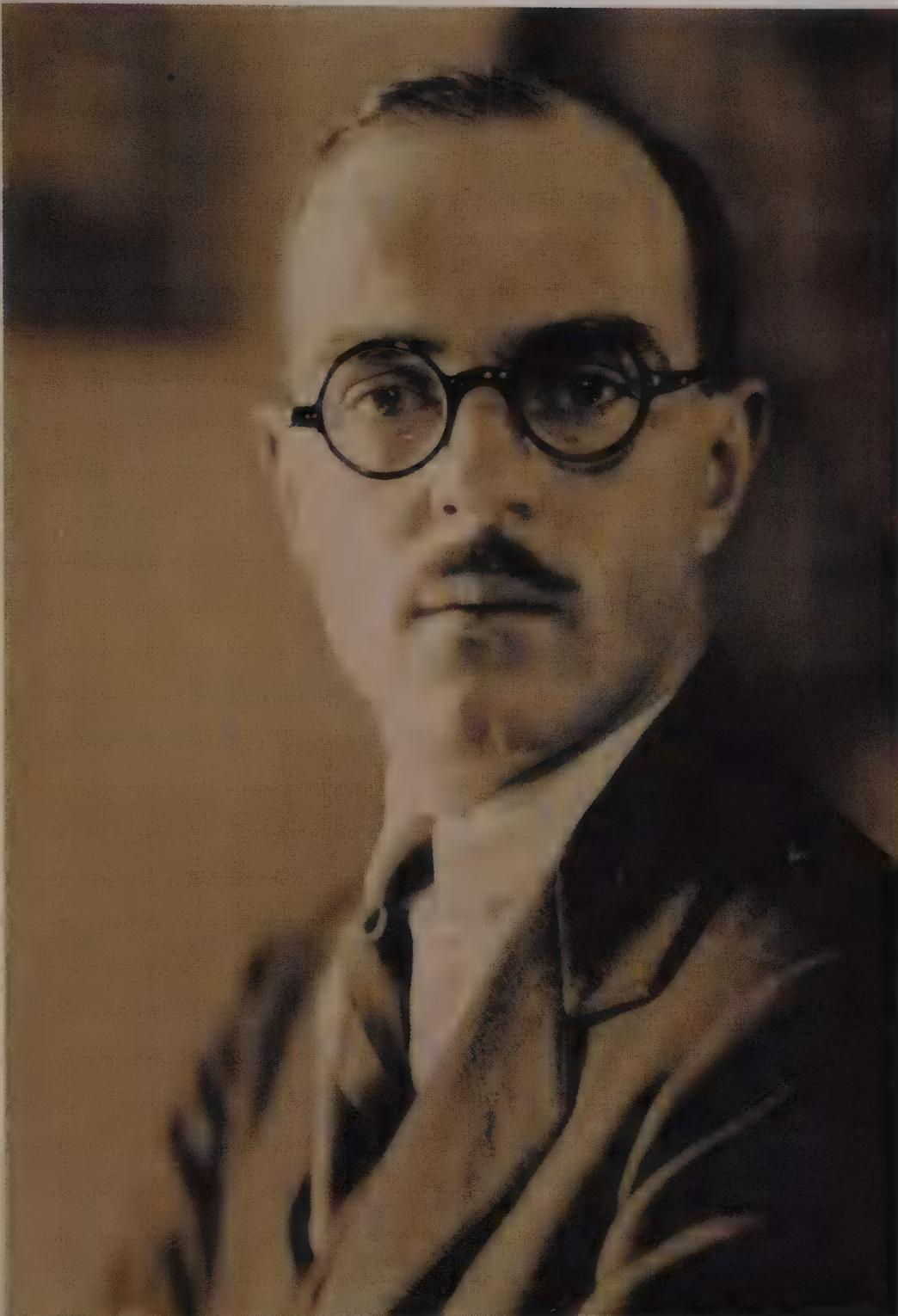
All of these were, of course, terrible career moves. Even before Wilder’s death in 1975 at the age of seventy-eight, he had come to be widely, if wrongly, perceived as the gray-flanneled Rotarian of American letters, at once middlebrow, patriotic, and—pick one—sentimental or sententious. That his work repeatedly obsessed over the family and family life didn’t help. Out of context, even his most-quoted sentence—from the close of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*—sounds as hokey as a Hallmark card: “There is

a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.”

Alas, the strikes against Wilder don’t stop there. He remained unmarried, enjoyed the company of elderly ladies, liked to pal around with handsome young men, and seems to have been either that old-fashioned thing, a confirmed bachelor, or that politically incorrect thing, a closeted homosexual. Whichever the case, Wilder hardly lived up to his last name. Worst of all, he was your father’s kind of writer—successful.

As Penelope Niven demonstrates in her capacious and authoritative *Thornton Wilder: A Life*, Wilder was in fact among the most cosmopolitan of men, a writer who never repeated himself, a fastidious stylist with a flair for every kind of comedy, from the most ironic to the most farcical, a major interpreter of Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, fluent in French, German, Italian, and Spanish, and a guy who could hold his liquor at least as well as his friends Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Just as nearly all of Wilder’s novels remain fresh, readable, and remarkably difficult to categorize, so some of his plays, such as the famous *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942) and *The Long Christmas Dinner* (1931), could almost be

Michael Dirda is the author, most recently, of *Classics for Pleasure* (Harcourt) and *On Conan Doyle* (Princeton University Press).



the work of a funnier Brecht, a more loquacious Beckett.

It may further surprise readers to learn that Wilder met, and was esteemed by, a greater number of eminences than that tuft hunter Truman Capote could even dream of. Wilder chatted with Sigmund Freud, received fan mail from Albert Einstein and T. E. Lawrence, counted heavyweight boxing champion Gene Tunney a close friend, worked harmoniously with Alfred Hitchcock on the script for *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), discussed existentialism with Sartre, and consorted with such

movie stars as Montgomery Clift and Tallulah Bankhead. In the 1930s he tipped that era's literary kingpin, Alexander Woollcott, to assist a promising eighteen-year-old actor named Orson Welles. In the late 1950s, he suggested that a young poet named Edward Albee should try his hand at plays.

Wilder's affability and even temper, steady application to his craft, and unwavering devotion to his family can seem unromantic, almost insipid. But he was, in many ways, a European-style intellectual, his favorite writers ranging from Madame de Sévigné and Goethe

to Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. At the same time, he was a consummate American theater professional, even playing the Stage Manager in innumerable performances of *Our Town*. And despite the Pulitzers, Broadway hits, and celebrity friends, Wilder never acted the prima donna. He didn't fuss or go in for star turns; he simply got on with his work.

Penelope Niven, best known for her biographies of Carl Sandburg and Edward Steichen, opens her *Life* with a brief account of her subject's austere New England ancestors, whose Yankee virtues of thrift, temperance, and Christian high-mindedness were taken to unfortunate extremes by Wilder's father. Three days before his wedding, Amos Parker Wilder felt morally obliged to tell his bride that he would never get over his love for another woman. As his wife, Isabella, later wrote, he "never did. Never has." She once called their wedding day "the worst day that ever befell either of us."

For a while, Amos ran a newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, but eventually he wangled a post as U.S. consul general in Hong Kong. The constant socializing of their new diplomatic life overwhelmed Isabella, who grew increasingly neurasthenic and depressed. During the first six years of their marriage she had dutifully produced four children, as well as the stillborn twin of Thornton. Eventually Mrs. Wilder boldly took her two younger daughters to Italy, then moved to Berkeley, California. Years would go by before the family reunited. They all became inveterate letter writers.

Amos proved to be a lackluster, even incompetent, foreign-service officer. Instead of wine he would serve grape juice at official functions. While his elder son, also named Amos, won paternal approval for his athletic prowess and religious bent, Thornton was derided as a "delicate, girl-playing aesthetic lad" who liked to sing and to play the violin and piano. Both boys attended a German-run school in China before being shipped to a boarding school in California. Thornton was often lonely, especially for his mother.

Because two of the family's forebears had helped endow Oberlin College, and because it was a theologically minded institution with a tradition of social

service, the senior Wilder sent both his sons there for two years. Wilder loved Oberlin, but to his father's consternation spent most of his time writing short stories and plays.

After transferring to Yale—and now set on a literary career—Wilder managed to flunk three courses (Latin, geology, and biology) in his first two years. When the First World War broke out, he interrupted his studies to enlist, serving stateside as an artilleryman before returning to Yale to graduate in 1920. During the summers, Amos Sr., taking the notion of muscular Christianity quite literally, mandated that his children work on farms or as coaches at summer camps. None of the Wilder children—Amos, Thornton, Charlotte, Isabel, Janet—would ever wholly escape their father's controlling “octopus-personality.”

Inevitably, as Niven writes, Wilder had “to get away from home in order to be himself.” After his graduation, the would-be writer spent a year in Italy, during which time he learned Italian, explored Rome, and visited an archaeological dig that would crucially influence his artistic vision. There, as Wilder wrote in a letter, he marveled at a series of “faded paintings of a family called Aurelius” discovered underground while “the street-cars of today rushed by over us.” The images of everyday domesticity prompted an epiphany: “We were clutching at the past to recover the loves and pieties and habits of the Aurelius family, while the same elements were passing above us.”

During his European sojourn, Wilder, who had hitherto mainly produced playlets for his colleges’ literary magazines, began work on a book. In 1926, Albert and Charles Boni published *The Cabala*, Wilder’s deliciously witty first novel, in which a young American arrives in Rome, falls in with an aristocratic clique, and coolly records its members’ pretensions and unhappy love lives. Structured, like so much of Wilder’s later fiction, as a series of intertwined “portraits,” or episodes, *The Cabala* could readily be mistaken for an early work of Aldous Huxley or Ronald Firbank. (Asked to say grace, the learned Cardinal Vaini begins: “Oh, pelican of eternity.”) It also displays those mixtures of fantasy and realism,

comedy and tragedy, illusion and disillusionment, and spiritual belief and earthbound reality that run throughout Wilder’s work. ▶

The Cabala proved a critical success, and though Wilder kept his day job teaching French at the Lawrenceville School, he soon began work on a second novel, this one about five people who are killed when the finest bridge in all Peru suddenly collapses. Wilder was in his late twenties when he wrote *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, at once an inquiry into God’s unfathomable ways and a work of almost eighteenth-century suavity. The story’s abbess is so hated by the archbishop of Lima that the latter “counted the cessation of her visits among the compensations for dying.” Wilder neatly balances irony and often poignant understatement: “Uncle Pio said that when they had crossed the bridge they would sit down and rest, but it turned out not to be necessary.” Nearly all the book’s characters inadvertently hurt those they love most.

The Bridge of San Luis Rey won the Pulitzer Prize (edging out the oddly similar and comparably beautiful *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, by Willa Cather), and its success made Wilder temporarily rich. His father, it almost goes without saying, groused that his son would probably just waste the money or spend it on worldly frivolities. In fact, Wilder gave most of his earnings to his family.

In 1930, further demonstrating his artistic range, Wilder produced *The Woman of Andros*, a novel set in ancient Greece and composed in a crystalline, serene prose reminiscent of Benjamin Jowett’s translation of Plato. Its first half focuses on Chrysis, a gracious and learned courtesan resigned to “the slow misery of existence.” An affair between Chrysis’ younger sister and the son of a local chieftain constitutes the second half of this plaintive “notation of the heart,” to borrow a phrase from *The Bridge*. All ends in sorrow, leavened by prefigurations of the solace that Christianity will one day bring to humankind.

If ever a work of fiction deserved to be called exquisite, this is it. *The Woman of Andros* has earned a place in the company of the pseudoclassical works so prevalent in interwar Europe—think of Paul Valéry’s *Eupalinos*, Cesare Pavese’s *Dialogues with Leucò*, Igor Stravinsky’s

Apollo ballet, the plays of Jean Giraudoux and Jean Cocteau. Even though the action in Wilder’s novel ostensibly takes place on the island of Brynos, the characters often seem to speak on an almost bare stage like that of the great play Wilder would write a few years later. Indeed, *The Woman of Andros* contains the seed that will eventually grow into *Our Town*. Chrysis relates the story of a man who foolishly requests that the gods return him to life for a single day:

Suddenly the hero saw that the living too are dead and that we can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasure; for our hearts are not strong enough to love every moment. And not an hour had gone by before the hero who was both watching life and living it called on Zeus to release him from so terrible a dream. The gods heard him, but before he left he fell upon the ground and kissed the soil of the world that is too dear to be realized.

The *Woman of Andros* provoked an unexpected and withering attack. The Marxist critic Michael Gold lacerated Wilder as a toady of the establishment and a practitioner of mannered, outmoded forms of writing. Gold’s tendentious barrage is now generally dismissed, but there is some truth to his criticisms. Wilder’s early fiction scarcely acknowledges the modern industrial world; his books, concerned with metaphysical and theological questions, might almost be categorized as *contes philosophiques*. Even the beautifully wrought *Bridge* could be faulted for its Olympian remove. One never feels close to its doomed characters—Wilder simply talks about them—and the high stylistic gloss of the narrative exudes an almost Frenchified artificiality.

Despite his claims to the contrary, Wilder may have taken heed of Gold’s argument for a more relevant social-realist art. His next book, *Heaven’s My Destination* (1935), relates the picaresque, fast-paced adventures of a hayseed Don Quixote in the Depression-era Southwest. The hero, George Brush, is a good fool—Freud called him an “American fanatic”—who believes in the literal truths of the Bible, eschews drinking and smoking, and tries to live by the precepts of Gandhi, especially those

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concerning nonviolence. Brush is also a traveling salesman, peddling school textbooks, and on his rounds this innocent mistakes a brothel for a boarding house, tries to save the soul of a hold-up man during a robbery, and one night succumbs to the blandishments of a farmer's daughter, who disappears before he can do the right thing and marry her.

Turning away from the elegant and often epigrammatic prose of his earlier books, Wilder here revels in the poetry of the vernacular. In one chapter, for instance, a well-to-do judge announces his hope that George, whom he persists in calling Jim, will take his rather plain daughter off his hands:

The judge paused, then began in a cordial and confidential tone: “Jim, young fella, you made a big hit with my daughter, a big hit. I know that little girl and it's not every man that interests her, no, sir. Now listen. I want to give you a little tip. Just between you and I, see? ... just man to man. That girl ought to have a nice home of her own. See what I mean? You might say she ain't really happy up at our house. Jim, thirty-five thousand dollars goes with that girl. Yes, sir, if she can find a good home, thirty-five thousand dollars goes with her. Depression year, too. Think it over. Yes, and what's more, I'm in a position to settle a young man in some good job around the Capitol, too. Well, that's just between you and I.... How does it appeal to you, eh?”

We've come a long way from the campy quips of *The Cabala* and the meditations of *The Bridge* or *The Woman of Andros*. This is the kind of homespun twang, suitably tempered, that will make possible *Our Town*. But how, finally, we should regard Heaven's My Destination remains elusive: Is it a modern Pilgrim's Progress, or a critique of cornpone fundamentalism? Is its protagonist a simpleton, or a saint in the making?

By 1938, Wilder was well established as a novelist, lecturer, and teacher. *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden* (1931) had also been staged on Broadway to respectable notices. But a new work about “the life of a village” juxtaposed against “the life of the stars” was about to become the most popular play in the American theater repertory. Wilder

himself worried that *Our Town* might possibly be too painful, its somber truths too heartbreaking. According to Niven, as the original cast did its first read-through of the famous third act, when the dead Emily returns to Grover's Corners for a single day, they had to stop, again and again, because of their weeping.

Responding to the outbreak of the Second World War the following year, Wilder constructed his most ambitious drama, a theatrical extravaganza that is half myth, half Marx brothers comedy. *The Skin of Our Teeth* tracks the history of the human race through time as a single, seemingly immortal family (and its sexy maid) face one crisis after another. It features, among other things, a woolly mammoth and a dinosaur, the arrival of the Ice Age and a biblical flood, the invention of the wheel and the alphabet, a visit to the Atlantic City boardwalk, a radio interview with the president of mammals, a global war, pratfalls and seductions, and audience participation.

By the time this “tragedy-comical-historical-pastoral”—to borrow a phrase from another playwright—opened, the forty-five-year-old Wilder was again in uniform. Assigned to intelligence, he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and earned a Bronze Star. At war's end, Wilder was left physically and mentally exhausted. He retreated to his family's home in Hamden, Connecticut, but was soon faced with several crises, starting with his sister Charlotte's schizophrenia, the final dashing of his sister Isabel's marital hopes, and his mother's death. Partly as therapy, Wilder started fiddling with what would become an episodic “fantasia” about the events surrounding the assassination of Julius Caesar. Published in 1948, *The Ides of March* presents itself as a compilation of documents—memos, letters, reports, diary entries—swirling around a weary, politically astute Caesar, the existential hero as overworked executive: “I enclose in this week's packet,” he writes to his friend Turrin, “a half-dozen of the innumerable reports which, as Supreme Pontiff, I receive from the Augurs, Soothsayers, Sky Watchers, and Chicken Nurses.... What's to be done? I have inherited this burden of superstition and nonsense. I

govern innumerable men but must acknowledge that I am governed by birds and thunderclaps.

To many, *The Ides of March* is its author's most winning novel, and fully the equal of Robert Graves's better known *I, Claudius* and Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian*. Wilder investigates the opposing tugs of order and disorder, the former represented by the dictator Caesar, the latter by the wild, thoughtless girl Clodia (who inspires the love-racked poetry of Catullus, another character in the novel). Just before the death he has foreseen, Caesar declares that what matters most of all is to live one's life with "intensity."

Like his other works, *The Ides of March* reveals Wilder as a creative magpie, drawing on, and transforming, the work and thought of others, whether Suetonius or Sartre. *The Woman of Andros* was partly derived from a play by Terence, while *The Skin of Our Teeth* was once assailed, somewhat ludicrously, as being a simplification of *Finnegans Wake*. During the 1950s Wilder labored over a never-published drama called "The Emporium," inspired largely by his fascination with Kafka's *The Castle*. Even his last major play, *The Alcestiad* (1955), would reconfigure an ancient myth, used by many writers before him: The good wife Alcestis agrees to die for her husband—and then returns from the dead.

The 1950s proved a frustrating decade for Wilder. He delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1950–51 but never managed to transform his reflections on classic American literature into the crafted work of nonfiction he envisaged. (*American Characteristics and Other Essays* was edited by Donald Gallup and published, posthumously, in 1979.) By 1962, the aging man of letters felt it was time to light out for the territories. Shortly after he was honored by President Kennedy at a formal White House dinner, Wilder packed his bags and drove west. When his car broke down near the small town of Douglas, Arizona, he stayed there for nearly two years. Known as "the Professor," Wilder cooked his own meals, drank at the local saloons, and, to his own surprise, eventually started a new novel. Published in

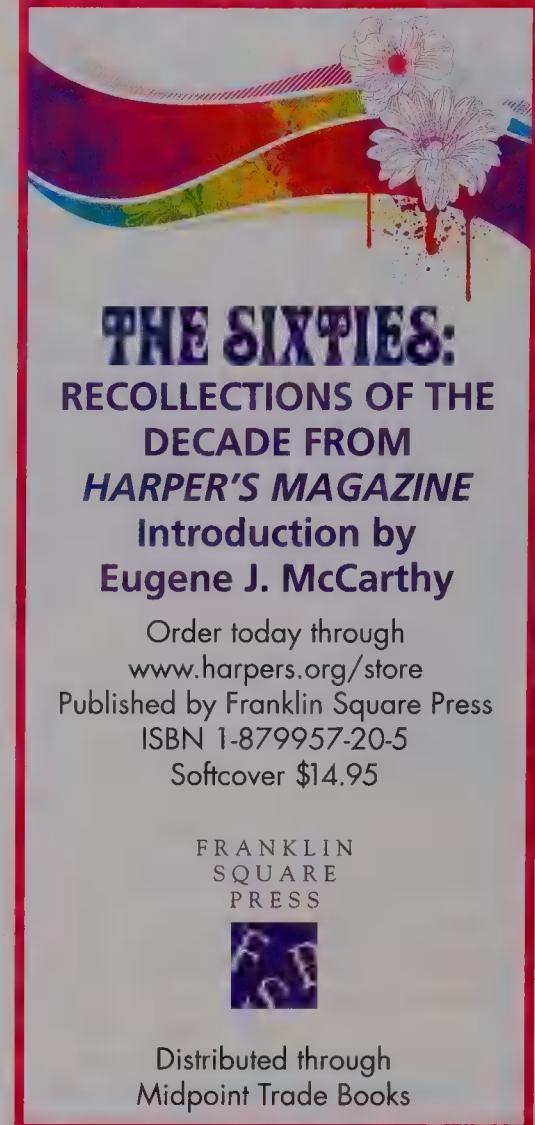
1967, *The Eighth Day*, a mix of mystery and family saga, won the National Book Award. The book opens with a dramatic flourish:

In the early summer of 1902 John Barrington Ashley of Coaltown, a small mining center in southern Illinois, was tried for the murder of Breckenridge Lansing, also of Coaltown. He was found guilty and sentenced to death. Five days later, at one in the morning of Tuesday, July 22, he escaped from his guards on the train that was carrying him to his execution.

On the run, Ashley abandons his family and flees to South America; three of his four children, however, grow up to become world famous. *The Eighth Day* is Wilder's longest and most ambitious novel, albeit one that divides readers. Some, like Wilder's Library of America editor, the poet J. D. McClatchy, view it as his masterpiece; others find it ponderous and windy, a gallimaufry of Theodore Dreiser, *All the King's Men*, and *Atlas Shrugged* (preternaturally gifted characters, inventions that could revolutionize the world). I find it an uneven work, though parts of it are irresistible, like this distinctly Joycean summary of the blustery conversation of old-style newspapermen:

The talk turned largely on liquor (after-effects of last night's consumption), women (rapacity of, their staggering over self-estimation, Schopenhauer's matchless essay on), politics (gorgonzola in the City Hall, populace led by the nose), their editors (exposure and downfall predicted), literature (Omar Khayyám, greatest poet that ever lived), philosophy (Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, towering intellect of), Chicago's rich men (hands and feet in the trough), religion (farcical character of, opiate of the masses), venereal disease (wonder doctor reported in Gary, Indiana).

When *The Eighth Day* appeared, Wilder was seventy, and his financial future had recently been secured by the 1964 musical *Hello, Dolly!* (based on his unsuccessful 1938 farce *The Merchant of Yonkers*, revised in 1954 as *The Matchmaker*). Though he might easily have devoted his later years to annotating *Finnegans Wake* or establishing the chronology of Lope de Vega's plays (two scholarly hobbies that obsessed him), Wilder instead wrote one final novel.



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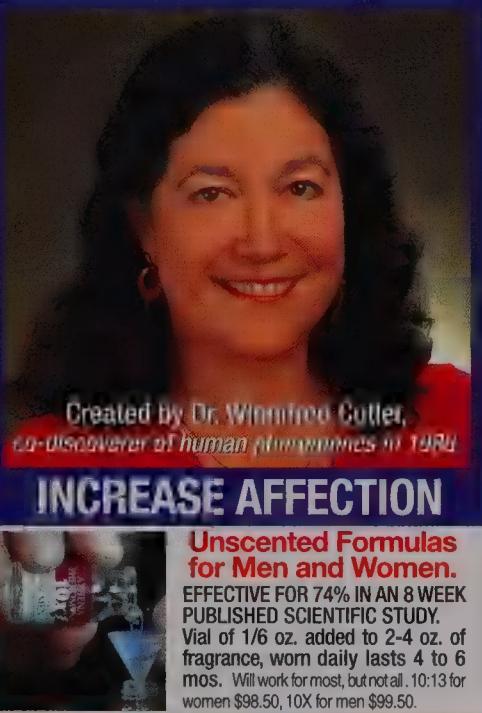
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Set in 1920s Newport, Rhode Island, *Theophilus North* is a mixture of autobiography and fiction, its hero a young adventurer with a flair for improvisation who comes to the aid of those in trouble, freeing them from the psychological bonds that prevent them from engaging with, and enjoying, life. The book is, in effect, one of those nostalgic, exuberant homages to youth sometimes produced by a great novelist at the end of his life. Think of Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull* or William Faulkner's *The Reivers*.

By 1973, the year of *Theophilus North*'s publication, Wilder was suffering from increasing deafness, loss of vision in one eye, hypertension, and several other ailments, though his boyish spirits and mental alertness were scarcely diminished. When he died—in his sleep, from a heart attack, with a copy of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* on the bedside table—he had been toying with an idea for a mystery novel to be called "Theophilus North, Zen Detective."

Niven's biography, the first to draw in depth from the Wilder family archives, underscores how much its subject regarded himself as part of "the little republic of Wilders." Niven portrays a man not so much riven as energized by opposing impulses. Though gregarious, Wilder also craved solitude. He loved his home in Hamden, Connecticut, but could write only elsewhere, usually abroad, often aboard a ship. Like *Theophilus North*, he enjoyed "butting into turgid complicated lives" yet always contrived to remain "tangential to someone else's whirlwind." Married women fell in love with him, but he discouraged intimacy while somehow preserving friendship. In his work too he alternated between fiction and drama, between teaching and acting, between scholarship and imaginative work.

Wilder's novels and plays, says Niven, raise the same tormenting questions over and over: "How does one love, and why? What is the nature and purpose of art, and the function of the artist? How does one truly live and bear the burdens of life?" In a beautiful passage from the seldom-staged *Alcestiad*, Wilder's heroine, Alcestis, reflects that the bitterness of death is not in the parting but in the "despair that one has not lived. It is the despair that one's life has been without meaning. That it has been nonsense;

happy or unhappy, that it has been senseless." The dead implore us, she says, "to show them that their lives were not empty and foolish."

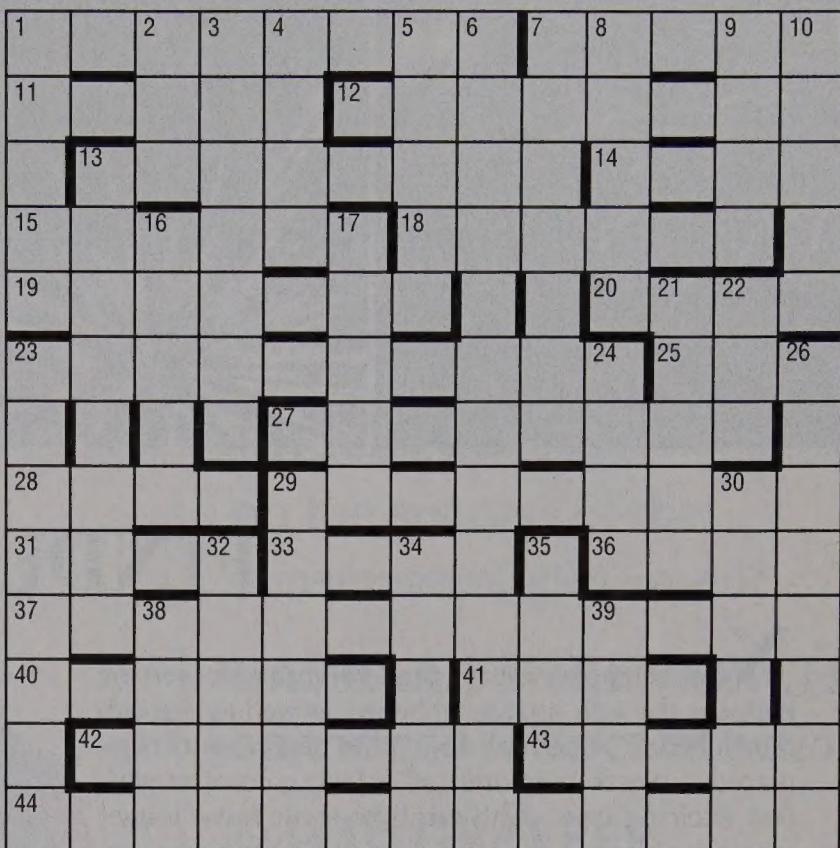
Virtually everything Wilder wrote addresses this universal angst, this mystery. Artists aren't in the answer game, but Wilder's work suggests, again and again, the vital importance of really seeing the world around us, of relishing the routines of ordinary life, of finding satisfaction in the quiet making and appreciation of art.

Kurt Vonnegut once called Thornton Wilder "the calmest, least strident, most humane and scholarly and forgiving and playful and avuncular American storyteller of the twentieth century." But Vonnegut also pointed out a "lack of immediacy and urgency and astonishment and suspense in all he wrote." That sounds quietly damning, yet surely there's a place for an art of such intelligence and humor and beauty and spiritual depth; we honor Apollo as well as Dionysus. Perhaps Edmund Wilson phrased it better still when he said that Wilder's work exhibits nothing less than "a Mozartian combination of lightness and grace with seriousness."

January Index Sources

- 1,2 The White House; 3,4 Enterprise Community Partners (Washington); 5 Bureau of Labor Statistics; 6 U.S. Department of Agriculture; 7,8 Adecco Staffing (N.Y.C.); 9 Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Madrid); 10 Conselleria de Justicia y Bienestar Social (Valencia, Spain); 11 Jennifer Ma, College Board (N.Y.C.); 12 The University of Phoenix; 13,14 American Association of University Women (Washington); 15,16 Michelle Tompkins, Girl Scouts of the United States of America (N.Y.C.); 17 GLAAD (Los Angeles); 18 Music Today (Charlottesville, Va.); 19 John Fetto, Experian Marketing Services (N.Y.C.); 20 IPAC-CO2 Research (Regina, Sask.); 21 Yale Project on Climate Change Communication (New Haven, Conn.); 22 Pew Research Center (Washington); 23 Public Policy Polling (Raleigh, N.C.); 24 Arlington National Cemetery (Arlington, Va.); 25 Center for Investigative Reporting (Berkeley); 26 Chicago Police Department; 27 Cook County President's Office (Chicago); 28 Chicago Police Department; 29 Amtrak Office of Inspector General (Washington); 30 Racebrook Capital (N.Y.C.); 31 Harper's research; 32,33 UBS Equity Research (N.Y.C.); 34 Steak 'N Shake (Indianapolis); 35 U.S. Department of Agriculture; 36 Congressional Research Service; 37 Harper's research; 38 Kim Masters, *The Hollywood Reporter* (Los Angeles); 39 Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (Wellington, New Zealand).

PUZZLE



HAPPY NEW YEAR

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

T

en entries are unclued. One is self-defined; the other nine are related to it.

Clue answers include two proper nouns, one foreign word, and one abbreviation. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 71.

ACROSS

- (see instructions) (8)
- Put the bite on a winner? (5)
- Old, like a tart? So they say! (5)
- A pixy has terrible trouble making pants? (8)
- Sadly, inertia takes over an indefinite number in multiyear cycles (8)
- Chicken not eaten? What a drag! (4)
- (see instructions) (6)
- Need an outrageous group like the Supreme Court? (6)
- I'm in ship covering low Desert Storm occurrences (7)
- (see instructions) (4)
- (see instructions) (10)
- Granting agency shows a layer receiving backing (3)
- Unexpected lull, i.e., in Alcoholics Anonymous. Praise God! (8)
- Trial facing couples from Tenth Street (4)
- Fruit is (quietly) an egregious misnomer (9)
- Create a duty for bank that has become sound (4)
- Troubles with these creators of estates (4)
- Accord money-raising fund a little time (4)
- (see instructions) (7,6)
- (see instructions) (6)
- Resume shows bringing back Big Bird et al. (4)
- Mounts Sinai, Cervino, Everest, initially, and southern surrounding (7)
- (see instructions) (5)
- Resolve issues from safest sedan on street (13)

DOWN

- Emulates the Little Engine's capacity, sticks close to shore (5)
- Almost fat Roman god (3)
- Prayers for starting a letter earlier in jails (7)
- No Russian has a yen to participate in public television (4)
- Slaves, but in a bad sense (5)
- Yellow quality not found in bound library books? (13)
- (see instructions) (7)
- Habitually gutless and a little pedestrian, given undeserved promotion (5)
- Slight mold we removed when upset (4)
- (see instructions) (5)
- (see instructions) (8)
- Rake moist leaves out (5)
- Beam that's part of mechanism I lengthened (5)
- In article after article, minute uprising reveals character (5)
- What starts on January 1 stops early? Indeed! (3)
- Pick up meals for serving at first by chance on grass (8)
- Sink under total pressure (4)
- Diana with a German accent goes topless (8)
- Drunk losing a pound is one of the Chosen? (6)
- (see instructions) (6)
- Yell, "Ugh, a plant!" (5)
- Carter, the wonder woman from Brooklyn daily (5)
- Bubbly entrepreneur speaks of not speaking (4)
- "Miss" coming out of closet (4)
- Butcher's offering two-time loser something really small (4)

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Happy New Year," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by January 11. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine* (limit one winner per household per year). Winners' names will be printed in the March issue. Winners of the November 2012 puzzle, "It's Time," are Paul Gardner, N.Y.C.; Joanne Trimble, Austin, Tex.; and Dallas Williams, Astoria, Ore.



FINDINGS

Neuroscientists found that voluntary forgetting happens through not-remembering as well as through remembering something else; other neuroscientists replaced subjects' memories of enjoying cocaine with less exciting ones. Shy rainbow trout have longer memories for the odor of predators than do bold trout, and bees shaken awake every five minutes as they try to sleep will not remember a new route home. New Zealand registered two new species of forget-me-not. Superb fairywren mothers teach their eggs a password that the newly hatched chicks must use when demanding food, and sleeping baby rats' whiskers were found to twitch even before the ratlings learn to whisk. Dolphins may remain continuously awake and alert indefinitely. "These majestic beasts," said a marine biologist, "are true unwavering sentinels of the sea." Clinical psychologists found that treating children with ADHD is difficult when care must be administered by parents with ADHD. Among the faculties of alcoholic men, the most impaired may be irony.

It's not her; it's you.

Male seed beetles are less successful in fertilizing females if they have had their genital spines shortened with lasers. Dung beetles climb atop their dung balls when their front feet overheat, according to neuroethologists who made the beetles wear silicone booties. *Clostridium difficile* sufferers may, as an alternative to bowel-excision surgery, drink warm water mixed with a healthy family member's donated stool. Healthy mice who were injected with the feces of crows who had eaten the brains of prion-infected mice themselves became infected. In Madagascar's Makira Protected Area, 53.4 percent of the population reported geophagy, and 19 percent reported eating ash, blackboard chalk, charcoal, rice chaff, rock salt, or used coffee grounds. German biologists concluded that vendettas are most viable within coherent groups of three or more people.

The contemplation of death does not turn cancerous young Danes to religion. Macaque couples were found to dislike the presence of other monkeys of any rank during sex, and also to prefer "sneaky" copulation for opportunistic rather than tactical reasons. Americans consider orange cats to be friendly, tortoiseshell cats to be intolerant, and white cats to be aloof. Humans' yawns are not contagious to young puppies. Scientists revealed that a now-dead white whale had learned to imitate human speech. An Asian elephant was found capable of speaking five words of Korean. Sand dunes with varying grain size will sing with greater range.

Bipolar women have complicated pregnancies, child prodigies are sort of autistic, subordinates recognize their bosses in a photo array before they recognize themselves, and people can lip-read more easily if the lips they read are their own. The risk of knee osteoarthritis increases if one is a black woman or a white man who drinks soda or an Australian child who does not exercise much. Mayo Clinic doctors found that knee-replacement surgery benefits the poor more than it does the rich, and Hospital for Special Surgery doctors found that it causes the poorly educated more pain than it does the obese. A third of male Londoners suffer from penis blindness. A Suffolk police constable pleaded guilty to possession of Schedule 1 bird eggs, including those of marsh harriers, nightjars, and warblers. Coded messages were found in a capsule attached to the skeleton of a World War II carrier pigeon in a Bletchingly chimney. Shropshire badgers were being shot, then dumped by the road to make it look like an accident. Staff at Exmoor Zoo near Barnstaple deployed donated police riot shields against aggressive cranes. Authorities in Gaza captured an escaped crocodile who had been living in the sewers and eating local ducks and goats. "He had a lot of spirit in him," said police lieutenant colonel Samih al-Sultan. "He wanted to be free."

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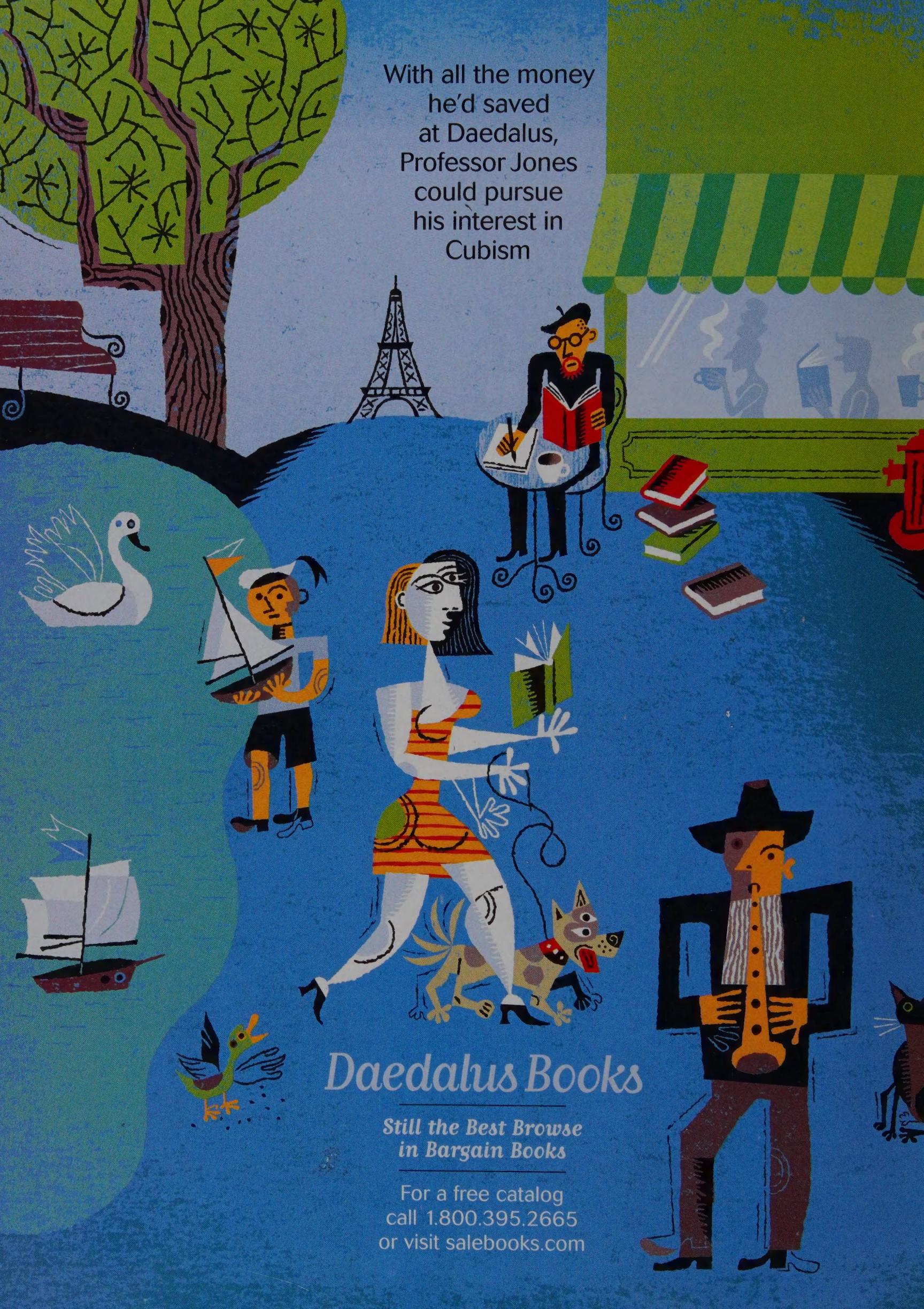
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